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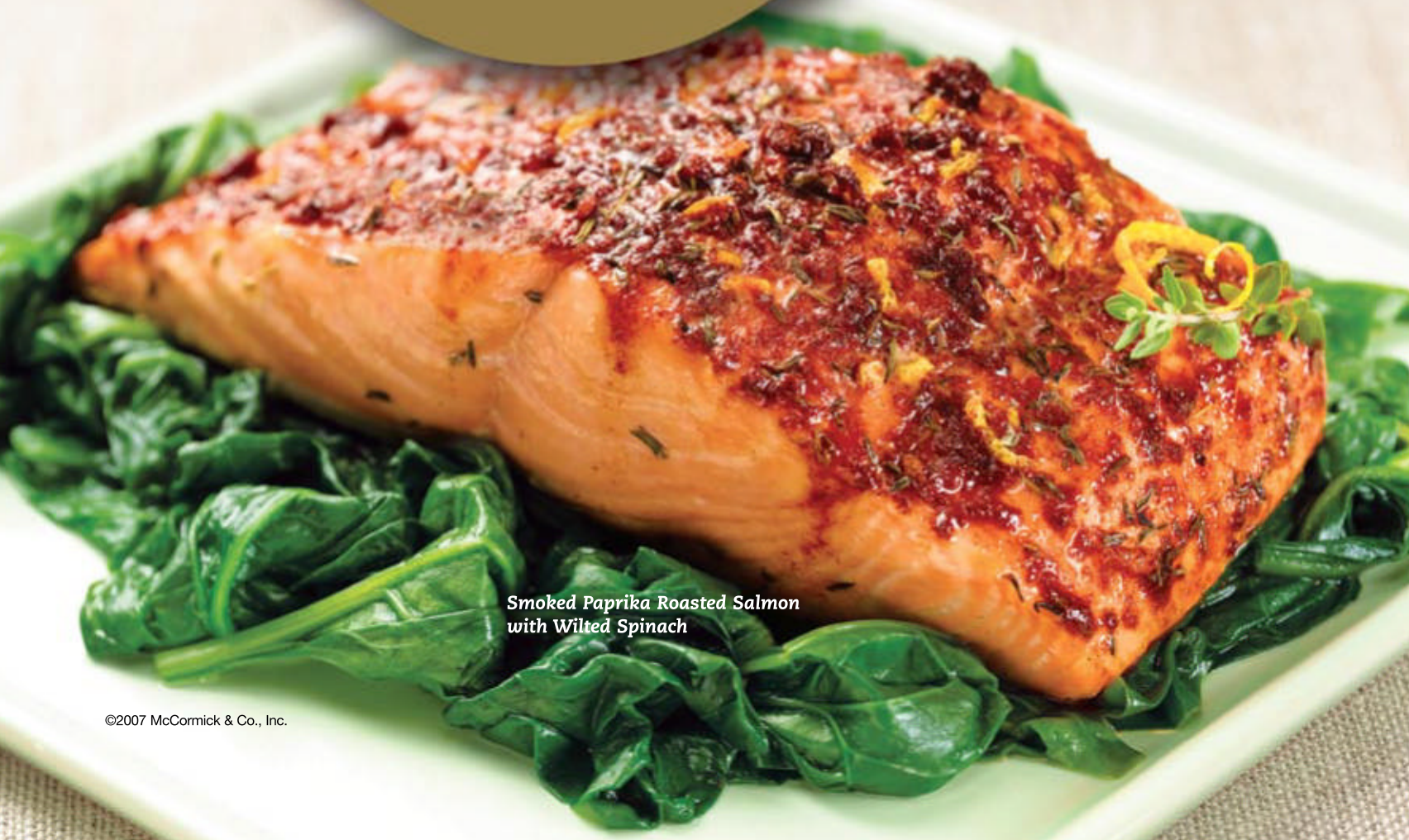




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*Shrimp Stew with Coconut Milk,  
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- ◆ QUICK  
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ MAKE AHEAD  
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD  
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ VEGETARIAN  
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients



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# Everybody loves comfort food

This is the time of year, with short days and cold weather, when the warm, bright kitchen is particularly welcoming. And if you're like us, you find yourself looking to familiar, filling recipes to gather family and friends at the table. In this issue, we've pulled together a collection of comfort food favorites to bolster weather-chilled

spirits. And we've included plenty of one-dish stews and soups that can be meals in themselves with the addition of a green salad or a loaf of crusty bread.

Remember to check the yield on each recipe, as you may need to double or halve it to suit your needs.

## Favorites for midwinter get-togethers

Here are two ideas for comforting meals with flavors sophisticated enough for entertaining.

**Glazed Meatloaf with Peppers & Warm Spices**, p. 39

**Gingery Sautéed Carrots**, p. 46

**Mini Baguettes**, p. 60

**Hot Fudge Sauce**, p. 70, over coffee ice cream

**To drink:** A rich, spicy Zinfandel like the 2006 Gnarly Head Old Vine Zinfandel, Lodi, \$12

**Mediterranean Chicken with Mushrooms & Zucchini**, p. 50

**Roasted Baby Red, White & Purple Potatoes with Rosemary, Fennel & Garlic**, p. 41

**Chocolate-Espresso Mousse Torte**, p. 69

**To drink:** A spicy Syrah-Grenache blend like the 2006 Morgan Côtes du Crow's, Monterey County, \$20

## Two weeknight pairings

Both of these main dishes come together in a little over an hour, which includes hands-off time while they bake. As a bonus, both also shine as leftovers.

**Chicken with Apples & Cider**, p. 53

**Braised Fingerlings with Thyme & Butter**, p. 42

**To drink:** A crisp fruity Riesling like the 2006 Schloss Lieser Estate Riesling, Mosel, \$18

**Classic Baked Macaroni & Cheese, with pancetta add-in**, p. 49

**Balsamic Sautéed Mushrooms**, p. 47

**To drink:** A youthful Chardonnay with medium oak like the 2005 Rodney Strong Chardonnay, Chalk Hill \$20

## Warming start for a blustery day

There's no reason to rise early to make this decadent breakfast pairing. If you soak the oatmeal overnight, it cooks in just 15 minutes, and the ganache for the hot chocolate can be made ahead and refrigerated.

**Hot Chocolate**, p. 68

**Creamy Coconut Oatmeal with Dried Peaches & Candied Coconut Pecans**, p. 64

## Satisfying soups and sides

Try these two pairings for lunch or a light dinner. Both soups can be made ahead and reheated before serving.

**Classic Tomato Soup**, p. 55  
**Grilled Brie, Turkey & Pear Sandwiches**, p. 86a

**Curried Carrot Soup with Cilantro**, p. 86a  
**Baby Yukon Potato Salad with Shallots, Chives, Bacon & Lemon Vinaigrette**, p. 43



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from the editor

# Taking Comfort

Getting people to reveal their favorite comfort food can be hard. Sometimes the answers are embarrassing. Take my former boss, Martha Holmberg (now the food editor for *The Oregonian*). She's one of the savviest and most sophisticated cooks and eaters I know. However, she is also very fond of Cheez Whiz, which she admits only under duress. (Sorry, Martha.)

When I'm feeling in need of comfort, I make my mother's oven-fried chicken. While the chicken itself—rolled in flour and spices and basted in butter—is good, it's not the prize. What I really like are the delicious caramelized drippings on the bottom of the pan. Growing up, I used to fight my dad and sister for this stuff (we called it “the crispy”), so now I stand in the kitchen and eat it all off the bottom of the pan myself before I serve the chicken to anyone else. But don't tell on me.

Since we decided to dedicate this issue of *Fine Cooking* to comfort food (check out the meatloaves, the macaroni and cheese, the tomato soup, the chocolate...oh, I can't stop), I thought I'd ask a few other staff members what their favorite comfort food is. Fortunately, none of them are shy, and I didn't have any trouble getting them to 'fess up. Here are some of their responses:

My comfort food is without a doubt shortbread—buttery, tender, not too sweet, and preferably with toasted walnuts on top. Shortbread and a cup of tea will always boost my spirits.

—Enid Johnson, senior copy editor

Regardless of whether your comfort classics were passed down from your mother or are part of your own repertoire, you'll have plenty more favorites to add from this issue.

Mine is hot apple pie with vanilla ice cream, because it's scrumptious. Growing up, we got it only on special occasions, and my dad and I would pig out on it and then eat the leftovers for breakfast.

—Allison Ehri Kreidler,  
test kitchen associate and food stylist

My favorite comfort food is brownies, dense and fudgy. The nostalgia factor is big with these as is the fact that they can be made fairly quickly with few ingredients, which I almost always have on hand. Nothing puts crisis in perspective like chocolate.

—Lisa Waddle, associate editor

I think I'd have to say soft-scrambled eggs made with butter and cream or crème fraîche if I have it on hand. It's quick and low-effort, but it feels very luxurious. With toast, it's the perfect dinner for one when I want to cocoon at home.

—Sarah Breckenridge,  
managing Web editor

Well, I may have a slightly different notion of comfort food, since I grew up in Italy. I think creamy *polenta concia*—that is, polenta mixed with lots of butter and cheese—is my ultimate comfort food, especially when paired with a rich braised dish like *brasato al Barolo*. But I also like my mom's baked pasta: She uses rigatoni and mixes it with sausage *ragù* and *besciamella* sauce and sticks everything in the oven until it's a little crispy on the edges. Yum!

—Laura Giannatempo,  
associate editor

Oh dear, I hope my mother isn't reading this—she may get a complex when she sees what Laura's mother made for dinner. (Actually, one of my other favorite comfort dishes is a spaghetti and meat sauce recipe my mom learned from an Italian friend while my dad was in the Navy.)

Regardless of whether your comfort classics were passed down from your mother or are part of your own repertoire, you'll have plenty more favorites to add from this issue. Plus, you can learn how to make a crusty French baguette at home (p. 58), try a new method for roasting chicken (p. 50), or add a super-quick vegetable sauté to your weeknight repertoire (p. 44). After all, comfort doesn't come just in the form of a finished recipe; it's the afternoon or the hour or two spent in the kitchen simmering the soup, stirring a bowl of melted chocolate, or just smelling that alluring aroma of baking bread.

—Susie Middleton, editor



## from our readers

### Mashed potatoes or drywall—same tool

Listen, you guys got the potato mashers all wrong when it comes to big batches of potatoes for the holidays. ("Equipment," *Fine Cooking* #88.) You just need to go to your local home improvement center and ask for a hand-held joint-compound mixer that's used for a five-gallon bucket. It has a long handle and is a lot bigger than a regular potato masher. It will do just fine for a big batch of potatoes, and it's less work. Plus, it might motivate your other half to do those repairs that are needed around the house.

—Robert Schoessel, via email

### A no-meltdown menu

I cooked the entire make-ahead Thanksgiving menu that was in your November issue (*Fine Cooking* #88). I am a Canadian living in the United States, so we have CanAm Thanksgiving in between the two countries' Thanksgivings. It was the first dinner party in awhile where I didn't have the pre-party meltdown as I tried to get last-minute things done. Nor was I exhausted from cooking by the time my guests arrived. And finally, everything tasted fabulous. Thank you so much.

—Janelle Simpson, via email

### Cooking and eating in season

My book club recently read *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver, which really tapped into a feeling we have all had about eating and cooking with the seasons and eating locally grown food. *Fine Cooking* has an "In Season" column and seems to usually focus on sea-

sonal ingredients, but I'd really appreciate even more emphasis on this topic. Something like a chart of seasonal vegetables would really help me in shopping, though I realize you'd have to note when vegetables were available in various regions of the country. Thanks for a great magazine.

—Jenny Russell,  
Telluride, Colorado

**Editors' reply:** Thanks for your letter, Jenny. We definitely agree with you about eating seasonally, and we try to plan each issue around seasonal foods. Also, we'll soon be running an "Ask the Experts" department on what it means to try to incorporate more locally grown food into our cooking.

We also thought you'd like to know about a special issue we publish. A while back we noticed how popular our "In Season" department and our vegetable and fruit articles were, so we began to put together a special issue every year called *Fresh*. Our *Fresh* collections are filled with seasonal recipes and lots of fresh ingredient information, too. We'll be publishing the next edition in April, but you can purchase back copies of *Fresh* at [www.finecooking.com](http://www.finecooking.com). ♦

Here's the place to share your thoughts on our recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies. Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com).

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# Getting the most from our recipes

## How to follow a recipe

- ❖ Before you start, read the recipe from start to finish so there are no surprises.
- ❖ Before actually starting to cook or bake, gather all the necessary ingredients and equipment. Prepare the ingredients according to the directions in the ingredient list (see "Watch those modifiers" at right for more on this).
- ❖ For determining doneness, always rely first on the recipe's sensory descriptor, such as "cook until golden brown." Consider any times given in a recipe merely as a guide for when to start checking for doneness.

## Ingredients

Unless otherwise noted, assume that

- ❖ butter is unsalted
- ❖ eggs are large (about 2 ounces each)
- ❖ flour is unbleached all-purpose (don't sift unless directed to)
- ❖ sugar is white granulated
- ❖ fresh herbs, greens, and lettuces are washed and dried
- ❖ garlic, onions, and fresh ginger are peeled.

## Watch those modifiers

A recipe ingredient list contains words such as "diced" and "chopped" that tell you how to prepare each ingredient for the recipe, but what you may not realize is that the placement of these "preparation modifiers" in the ingredient line is as important as the modifier itself. Take, for example, the following two similar lines that you may see in a recipe ingredient list:

**1 cup rice, cooked**  
**1 cup cooked rice**

The first line is telling you to take 1 cup of rice and cook it; the second line is calling for 1 cup of rice that has already been cooked. The difference between the two is about 2 cups of cooked rice, and that can make a big difference in the outcome of a recipe.

## A pint isn't necessarily a pound

Don't confuse fluid ounces with ounces. Fluid ounces are a measure of volume; ounces are a measure of weight. For example, 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of honey weighs 12 ounces. The only time you can be positive that fluid ounces and ounces are equal is when you're measuring water.

## Use the right measuring cup

To measure flour or other dry ingredients, stir the flour and then lightly spoon it into a dry measuring cup and level it with a knife; don't shake or tap the cup. Be sure to measure liquids in glass or plastic liquid measuring cups.

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EDITOR

**Susie Middleton**

ART DIRECTOR

**Annie Giammattei**

SPECIAL ISSUES EDITOR

**Joanne McAllister Smart**

SENIOR FOOD EDITOR/TEST KITCHEN MANAGER  
**Jennifer Armentrout**

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ASSOCIATE EDITORS

**Laura Giannatempo, Lisa Waddle**

ASSISTANT EDITOR **Denise Mickelsen**

MANAGING WEB EDITOR **Sarah Breckenridge**

ASSISTANT WEB EDITOR **Sharon Anderson**

SENIOR COPY/PRODUCTION EDITOR  
**Enid Johnson**

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR **Pamela Winn**

TEST KITCHEN ASSOCIATE/FOOD STYLIST  
**Allison Ehri Kreidler**

RECIPE TESTER **Dabney Gough**

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT **Kim Landi**

EDITORS AT LARGE

**Maryellen Driscoll, Kimberly Y. Masibay**

TEST KITCHEN INTERN **Will Moyer**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

**Pam Anderson, Abigail Johnson Dodge,  
Tim Gaiser, Sarah Jay, Tony Rosenfeld,  
Molly Stevens**

PUBLISHER **Maria Taylor**

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER **Karen Lutjen**

VICE PRESIDENT, CIRCULATION  
**Dennis O'Brien**

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**Jay Annis**

SENIOR NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER  
**Judy Caruso**

NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER  
**Lawrence Dameron III**

ADVERTISING SALES ASSOCIATE **Stacy Purcell**

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## HOW TO CONTACT US:

### **Fine Cooking**

The Taunton Press, 63 S. Main St., P.O. Box 5506,  
Newtown, CT 06470-5506 203-426-8171

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### **Editorial:**

To submit an article proposal, write to *Fine Cooking* at the address above or:

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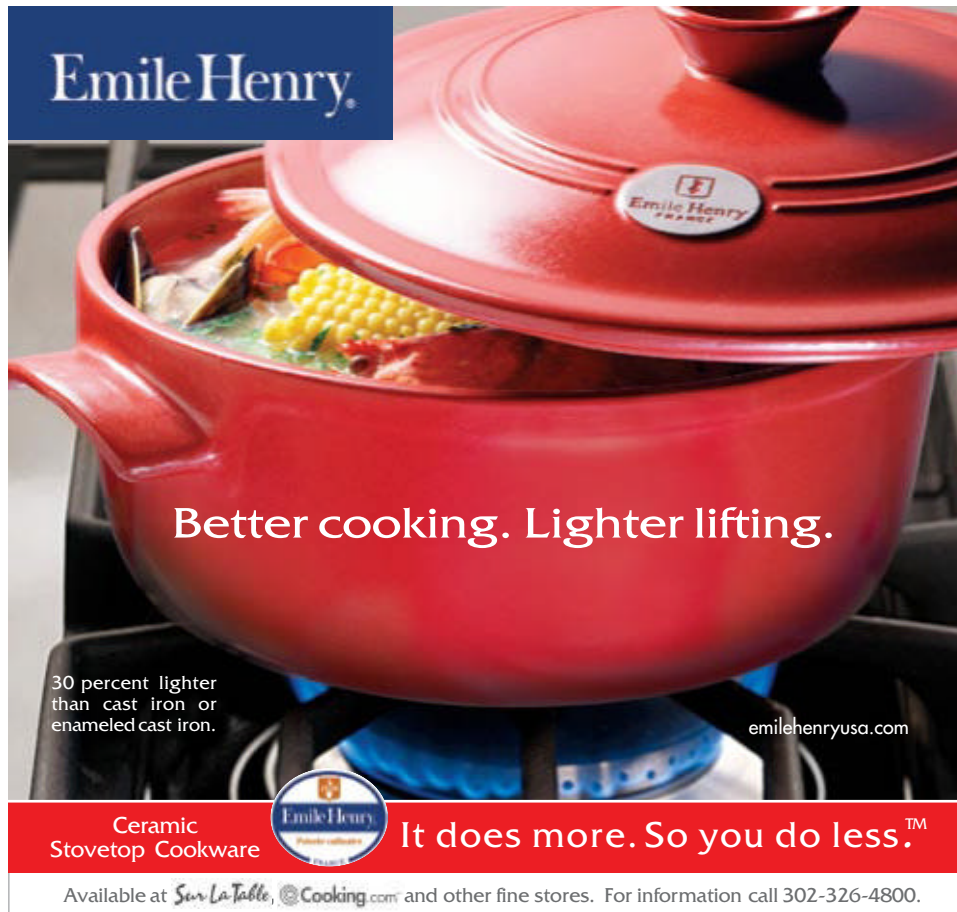


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Somehow **Jessica Bard** ("Meatloaf," p. 36), a former *Fine Cooking* staffer, found time to develop a meatloaf recipe for us in between food styling, writing, and teaching cooking classes at Warren Kitchen and Cutlery in Rhinebeck, New York. No less busy, **Alexandra Guarnaschelli**, after cooking for seven years in restaurants across France, is now executive chef at New York City's Butter Restaurant and a chef-instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education. **Suvir Saran**, a native of New Delhi and executive chef and owner of Dévi restaurant in New York City, has just published his second cookbook, *American Masala*.



Lori Longbotham

Contributing editor **Molly Stevens** ("Potatoes," p. 40) is the author of several cookbooks, including *One Potato, Two Potato* (co-written with Roy Finamore). When she's not developing recipes or writing about food, Molly travels all over the country teaching cooking classes.



Allison Kreitler

"I'm not a vegetarian, but I never get tired of messing around with vegetables. In fact, sometimes all we have for dinner is side dishes," says editor **Susie Middleton** ("Vegetable Sautés," p. 44). In her 11 years at *Fine Cooking*, Susie has developed nearly 100 recipes for the magazine—most of them vegetables.

When senior food editor **Jennifer Armentrout** ("Mac & Cheese," p. 48) was 5 or 6 years old, she asked her father to make macaroni and cheese for dinner. He made it from scratch, and she turned her nose up at it, expecting the orange stuff from a box that she'd had at a friend's house. Fortunately, she knows better now, and she thinks that

her grown-up version would make her late father proud.

Dividing her time between Provence and Minneapolis, **Mary Ellen Evans** ("Saucy Chicken," p. 50) believes in the restorative power of chicken. "When I stumble from the plane, jet-lagged and hungry, my first thought is getting some roast chicken," she says. Mary Ellen leads gastronomic tours of France and has written two chicken cookbooks.

**Perla Meyers** ("Tomato Soup," p. 54) was trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, and she continually upgrades her food education with regular trips abroad. She teaches culinary classes in New York and Connecticut.

After taking a bread class at The Bertinet Kitchen in Bath, England, *Fine Cooking* test kitchen associate **Allison Ehri Kreitler** ("Mini Baguettes," p. 58) came back with a few baking tricks up her sleeve. "The most valuable lesson I learned is that to get a light, airy loaf, bread dough should be sticky, really sticky," she says.

**Lori Longbotham** ("Coconut Milk," p. 62) loves anything coconut, so she was happy to teach us all about one of her favorite pantry staples, versatile coconut milk. Lori's newest cookbook, *Luscious Creamy Desserts*, will be published in March.

**Greg Case** ("Ganache," p. 66) began his baking career in New York, eventually became pastry chef at Boston's Hamersley's Bistro, and in 1999 opened G. Case Bakery. **Keri Fisher** is a food writer and cookbook author who cut her teeth at restaurants in Florida and Boston. Greg and Keri co-wrote *One Cake, One Hundred Desserts*. ♦



Keri Fisher and Greg Case



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Peter Reinhart is the author of seven books on bread baking, including his most recent, *Peter Reinhart's Whole Grain Breads*. He is a baking instructor at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina.

# Yeast 101

Active or instant? Slow rise or fast? Baker Peter Reinhart has the scoop on yeast.

**I see so many different packets of dry yeast at the store. What's the difference between active dry, instant, and quick-rise yeast? Are any as good as fresh yeast?**

—Tom Sevrin, Franklin, Tennessee

Some bakers disagree about this, but nearly all breads and pastries will perform equally well with any of the available yeast products (fresh, active dry, quick rise, or instant). **Active dry** yeast, developed about 150 years

ago, is sold in sealed, foil-lined packets. But in the packaging process, about 25% of the yeast cells die off, releasing a small amount of glutathione, which causes relaxation of gluten (this makes it a good yeast for pizza dough, but it's not ideal for all dough products).

**Instant** yeast, also called **quick rise** or **rapid rise**, came along about 30 years ago and has become more popular as its availability has increased. Because none of the yeast cells die during packaging, it

requires 25% less instant yeast than active dry yeast to leaven a loaf. The biggest advantage of instant yeast is that it dissolves directly in dough without having to be hydrated in warm water the way active dry yeast often does. (The mini baguette recipe on p. 60 uses active dry yeast without first hydrating it, but it works in this case because the dough is exceptionally wet.)

**Fresh** yeast, also called **compressed** or **cake** yeast, is sold refrigerated in foil-wrapped blocks and cubes. It's a moist product and has a limited shelf life of about three weeks, even if refrigerated. It is also harder to find for home baking. Professional bakers have traditionally liked this type of yeast because it's what they learned to bake with, but many of them are now switching to instant yeast because of its extended shelf life and ease of use.



**Sometimes when I make bread (especially brioche) I notice a very strong, unpleasant alcohol taste in the finished loaf. What causes this and how can I avoid it?**

—Jennifer Davis, Lethbridge, Alberta

What you are smelling is yeast fermentation—the conversion of sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide. When dough overferments, it gives off a stale beer smell. Some of this alcohol will bake off, but some of it may remain in the finished bread. Dough made with a high percentage of yeast and sugar, such as brioche and other soft, rich bread products, are more vulnerable to overfermentation than crusty breads such as French or Italian bread, which use small percentages of yeast. If your bread is overfermenting it may be because the dough is too warm or, if kept overnight in the refrigerator, it did not cool down quickly enough to stop the fermentation. Try making the dough with colder water or reduce the yeast by about 10%. Brioche, especially, should be chilled immediately after mixing to control the fermentation.

## Yeast tips

- ❖ Instant yeast stays good, unopened, for at least a year.
- ❖ When substituting instant yeast for fresh, use one-third the amount called for; that is, for every ounce of fresh yeast, use ⅓ ounce of instant.
- ❖ To substitute instant yeast for active dry, use 25% less instant.

**Once bread dough rises, is there a way to hold the dough if you are unable to bake it right away?**

—Christine Barron, via email

Bread dough can be held in the refrigerator to slow down the rising, in a process called retarding. You can do this at various stages of the breadmaking process. The best time is after it's had its first rise. Retarding actually improves the flavor of breads with low amounts of yeast and few or no enrichments (such as French bread), but with high-yeast and enriched doughs, the flavor will not be as good as if you baked it on the first day. ♦

In future issues we'll tackle convection cooking, spices, and eating local. Send your questions on these topics to Ask the Expert, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to [fcqa@taunton.com](mailto:fcqa@taunton.com).



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## on the front burner



Valentine's Day menu



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**Peter Reinhart**, baking instructor and author of *The Bread Baker's Apprentice* and *Peter Reinhart's Whole Grain Breads*, takes questions on baking with yeast.

**February 5–19**

**Molly Stevens**, *Fine Cooking* contributing editor and author of *All About Braising*, discusses braising cuts, tips, and techniques.

**February 20–March 5**



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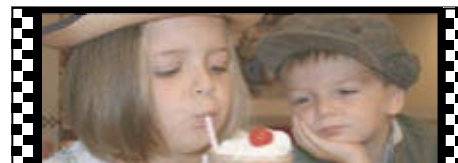
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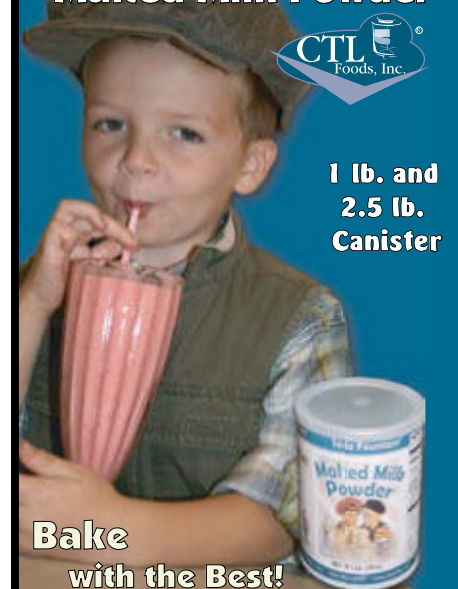
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# Rich, Creamy Home-Style Yogurt

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BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

At 6:30 in the morning three times a week, Benoît de Korsak drives his biodiesel truck down the windy, straw-colored hills around Bodega, a small town in northern California just a few miles east of the Pacific Ocean, to pick up 80 gallons of fresh milk from a nearby dairy. Bianchi's Dairy raises only pasture-fed Jersey cows—lean brown cows that somehow remind me of goats—and produce what in Benoît's opinion is the best-tasting milk. He brings the milk back to a small dairy facility shared with a cheesemaker, where he and his brother, David, make small batches of artisanal yogurt that they package in charmingly old-fashioned ceramic cups.

"We wanted to do everything locally and make a product that would be representative of this land," says Benoît. He and David, who are from the French alpine region of Savoie, experimented with different types of milk and recipes before settling on their current formula. "We found that when we were using 100% Jersey milk, the taste was so much better. Since our plain yogurt is just milk and cultures, the milk we use makes a big difference," says Benoît.

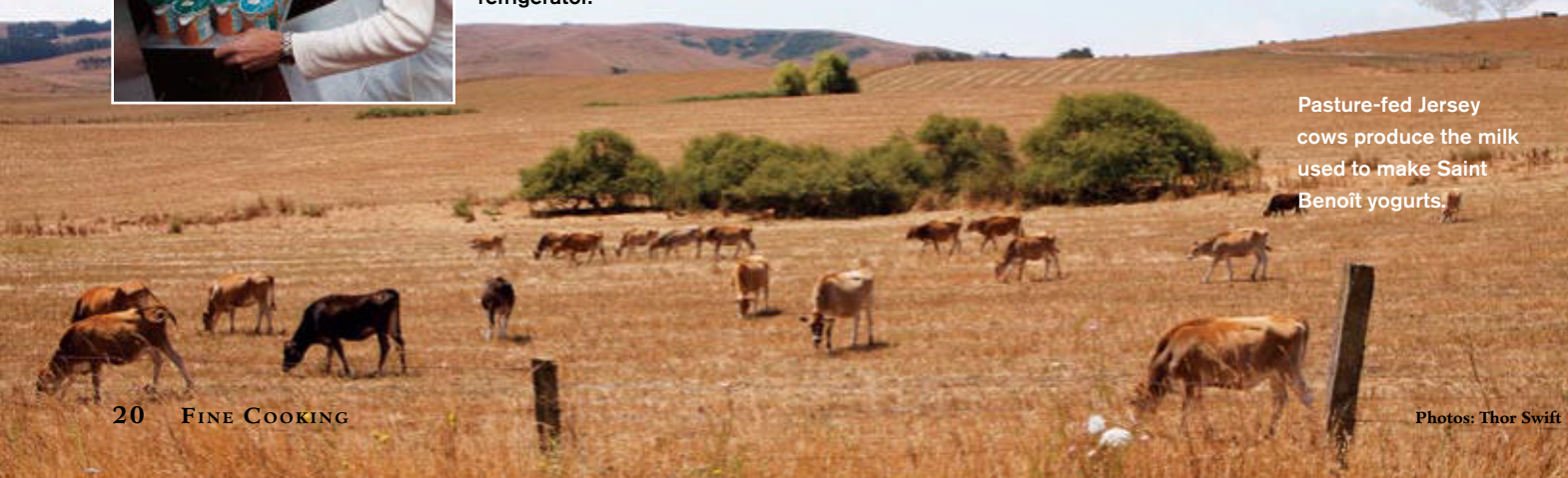
Their Saint Benoît Yogurt, named after the Benedictine monks who are

known for making delicious food using the products of their land, is rich and creamy and milder than most commercial yogurts sold in the United States. It's a bit sweeter, too, even without the addition of sugar. That's because they make it in the French style, using gentle cultures from France (the only nonlocal ingredient they use). In addition to their plain yogurt, the de Korsaks also make honey and fruit-flavored yogurts using honey from local beehives and natural fruit spreads from a neighboring farm. Their trademark ceramic containers not only contribute a traditional, handcrafted feel but are also environmentally friendly, as customers are encouraged to reuse them or take them back where they bought them. Benoît and David sell their yogurts at local farmers' markets and at the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market in San Francisco. They also distribute them to several grocery stores in the area, including Whole Foods and Dean & DeLuca.

For more information, visit [www.stbenoit.com](http://www.stbenoit.com). ♦



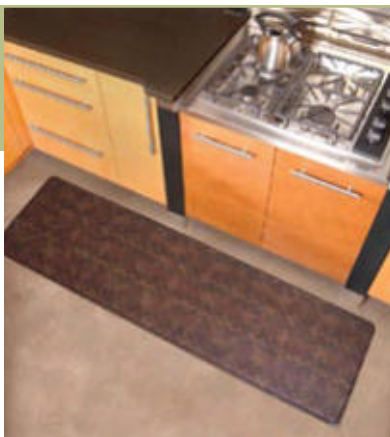
Pasture-fed Jersey cows produce the milk used to make Saint Benoît yogurts.





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# Soup's On

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

So you've made a comforting winter soup (hint: one of the delicious tomato soups on pp. 54–57), but what to serve it in? Here are some ideas, whether you're having a fancy dinner party or a low-key supper for one.

## A soup bowl with a twist

We're coveting this bowl and spoon set for its super-smart design—the spoon fits neatly into the bowl's handle, so you can easily carry it, one-handed, from kitchen to table. It's also great for serving sauces. *Royal VKB bowl and spoon set*, \$42.99 for two sets at [Laprimashops.com](http://Laprimashops.com) (866-983-7467).



## Present soup with style

We spotted this striking copper server at a trade show recently and think it's the perfect elegant vessel for serving soup at a party. Be prepared for the price tag—like most copper cookware,

this product doesn't come cheap. Available in four-, six-, and eight-quart sizes, it has a matching copper Sterno cup for keeping soup warm and a spoon rest for your ladle. *Sertodo four-quart bain marie*, \$399. For more information, visit [Sertodo.com](http://Sertodo.com) or call 512-923-4885.



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# Baking Bread at Home

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

I love bread, all kinds of bread: baguettes, ciabattas, sourdough, white, whole wheat, rye—you name it. But I'm definitely not a bread baker. Or rather, I wasn't a bread baker. To me, baking bread always seemed like something only experienced artisans or serious home bakers should tackle. But a few weeks ago, something made me change my mind.

Inspired by Allison Kreidler's super-easy baguettes on p. 60, I picked up Richard Bertinet's new book, *Crust*:

*Bread to Get Your Teeth Into* (Kyle Books, \$35), which is the follow-up to his award-winning *Dough*. Then a review copy of Peter Reinhart's *Whole Grain Breads: New Techniques, Extraordinary Flavor* (Ten Speed Press, \$35) showed up on my desk. And the next thing I knew I was baking bread, filling my apartment with the toasty smell of a bakery.

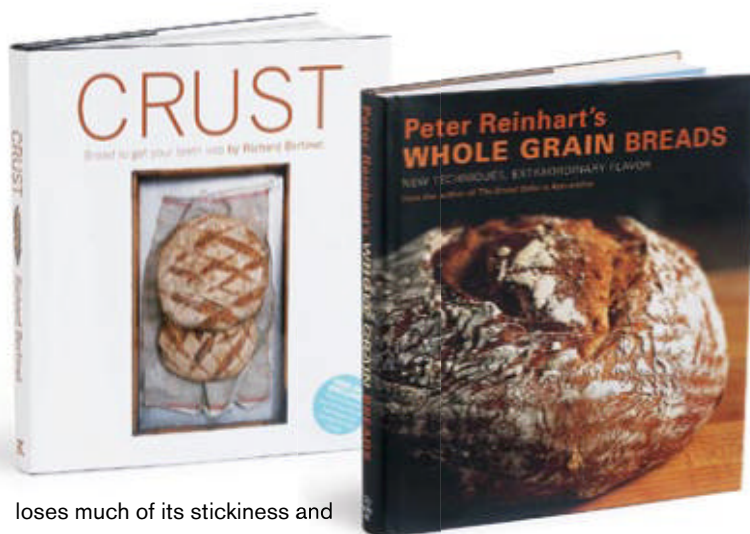
One of the reasons I suddenly found myself with hands in bread dough is that both books make it really easy to bake

delicious bread, even for a rookie like me. Not only are they nice-looking books with beguiling photos of crunchy loaves hot from the oven, but both also contain clear directions and plenty of useful process photos that guide you through every step. And both have recipes for easier breads that require only a few simple steps, as well as more complex bread-baking projects that involve feeding a starter for several days before you even think of turning on the oven.

## The importance of "working" the dough

In *Crust*, Richard Bertinet aims to show us how to apply the straightforward bread-baking approach he had illustrated in his brilliant first book, *Dough*, to slightly more complex doughs, such as sourdough. But fret not. There are also perfectly doable recipes for breads like baguettes and ciabattas, and you don't have to own *Dough* to enjoy *Crust*, as Bertinet reviews his method for working, folding, dividing, and shaping the dough in great detail, dispensing useful tips for preparing the oven and acquiring the necessary tools and ingredients.

Bertinet's philosophy for making delicious bread at home is fairly simple, at least on paper. It involves creating the right oven environment to allow a nice crunchy crust to form slowly and a method for mixing the dough that incorporates lots of air, producing a light, airy interior. Bertinet doesn't knead his bread dough in the traditional sense of pushing it with palms and knuckles. Instead, he "works" the dough by lifting it in the air, slapping it back on the work surface, and quickly folding it onto itself many, many times, until it



loses much of its stickiness and becomes smooth and malleable. This method takes a bit of practice, but it's well worth it: The ciabattas I baked were light and airy inside, with a lovely, crisp crust. (The DVD that comes with the book is indispensable if you want to nail Bertinet's technique.)

The book is divided into five sections: Tools & Techniques; Slow, covering doughs with a slow rise; Different, including bagels and spelt bread; Sweet; and Fact & Fiction, which dispels some common myths about bread. I found only one notable drawback: Bertinet calls for fresh yeast (also called compressed or cake yeast), which can be hard to find in American stores. The good news is that you can substitute instant yeast by using one-third of the required amount of fresh yeast.

## A special method for whole-wheat breads

Peter Reinhart's book focuses on whole-wheat breads of all kinds, from sandwich, country, and multigrain breads to challah, pita, and pizza. His goal is to create whole-wheat breads that are as tasty and satisfying as the white breads we're more accustomed to. To do this, he uses a method of delayed fermentation, which involves mixing what he calls pre-doughs first and then letting them rest overnight before adding additional yeast and other ingredients to make the final dough. In Reinhart's words, this "technique initiates enzyme action in some of the dough in order to maximize flavor development before inducing yeast fermentation."

His pre-doughs can be simple soakers (just flour, salt, and water), mashers (flour and water that have been heated until the starches gelatinize, looking somewhat like cream of wheat), or pre-fermented doughs made with commercial yeast or wild yeast (this is where the going gets a little tougher).

The book includes detailed directions for making pre-doughs and a master formula for a basic whole-wheat sandwich loaf, along with dozens of other enticing recipes and useful tips for preparing a home oven for bread baking and for using an electric mixer to mix the dough. It also has recipes for what Reinhart calls "transitional" breads, made with a combination of whole-grain flour and white bread flour. These recipes may appeal to novices because the dough is easier to work with than 100% whole-wheat dough.

Bakers interested in the science behind making bread will also appreciate Reinhart's detailed scientific explanations. But don't worry, you won't need to brush up on Chemistry 101 to use this book to bake wonderful bread (like the ciabattas and potato bread I tested). ♦



# Kale

Beautiful ruffled leaves and a peppery flavor

BY RUTH LIVELY

I confess that I haven't always been a big kale lover. In fact, I began eating it in earnest only five or six years ago, after seeing it in a collection of recipes for high-antioxidant foods. But if kale's reputation as a nutritional powerhouse got me interested, it was its frilly blue-green leaves, its toothsome texture that doesn't go all mushy in the blink of an eye, and, most important, its pleasant, earthy flavor with just the faintest bitter bite that got me hooked. Now it's a staple in my fall-through-spring kitchen.

When kale skeptics ask me what kale tastes like, I tell them to think of it as cabbage with an attitude: a little peppery, a little sweet, with a slight mineral edge, perhaps, but none of the metallic quality of spinach. Tiny, fresh kale leaves can be tender enough to eat raw in salads, but I usually prefer to cook kale with some liquid to make it enjoyably tender. Kale's hardy texture requires more cooking time—a good 15 to 20 minutes—than do spinach or other tender greens that wilt quickly. Braising, steaming, and simmering in soups are among the best cooking methods for kale. Cooked kale also makes an excellent ingredient for dishes like creamy gratins and rich savory tarts.

## Kale gets sweeter in winter

Kale is a fall and winter vegetable whose flavor becomes sweeter and mellower when the weather turns chilly. You'll find three basic types of kale in markets: **Scotch kale** (pictured at left), with ruffled, dark green (sometimes almost blue) leaves; **Russian kale**, with smaller, flatter, sweeter, and more tender leaves; and **Tuscan** or **black kale** (also known as *Lacinato* or *Dinosaur kale*), with elongated, very dark green leaves that have a pebbled texture. The latter is sometimes labeled *cavolo nero*, which means "black cabbage" in Italian. Scotch kale is what you're most apt to find at the grocery store, while the other two types are rarer and more likely to be sold at farmers' markets or specialty food stores.

Kale stands up well to assertive flavors, such as garlic, ginger, soy, briny black olives, hot pepper, spicy fresh sausage, and cured meats like bacon, pancetta, ham, and smoked sausage. Cream and cheese add richness and depth, while pasta, grains, potatoes, and beans provide a plain canvas to showcase kale's distinctive flavor. Vegetables with an inherent sweetness are a good match for kale, too. For instance, I love to serve braised kale alongside roasted sweet potatoes or butternut squash. And I find that a splash of acid, such as citrus juice or vinegar, just before serving kale always accentuates its flavor.

## How to choose, prep, and store it

Kale is usually sold in bundles. Choose deeply colored leaves, with no signs of yellowing or bruising. I store kale unwashed in an unclosed plastic bag in the refrigerator's crisper drawer, where it keeps well for two or three days. If you need to store it longer, wrapping the bundle in slightly damp paper towels before putting it in a plastic bag helps prolong its freshness. But try to use kale within five to seven days, because the longer you keep it, the stronger its flavor will become.

Wash kale in a deep sink or a very large bowl of cold water, gently swirling the stalks to encourage any soil or grit to disperse into the water. Shake off the excess water and pat dry with paper towels. Before cooking kale, you'll need to remove the tough stems and central ribs from all but the smallest leaves. You can cut them out with a knife or simply tear away the leaf from the rib.





## Mediterranean Kale & White Bean Soup with Sausage

*Yields about 10 cups; serves six to eight.*

This garlicky soup is a snap to pull together, and most of the ingredients are basic pantry staples. The whole thing is ready in about an hour, but the soup's complex flavors belie the quick cooking time. You can serve it as soon as the kale is tender, but letting it sit for an hour and then reheating gently makes it even better (wait to add the lemon until just before serving). Crusty cheese toasts make an excellent accompaniment.

**½ lb. sweet Italian sausage (about 3 links)**

**2 Tbs. olive oil**

**One-half small yellow onion, cut into small dice**

**1 medium carrot, cut into small dice**

**1 rib celery, cut into small dice**

**5 large cloves garlic, minced (about 2 Tbs.)**

**⅓ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**6 cups lower-salt chicken broth**

**1 lb. 3 oz. can cannellini or white kidney beans, rinsed and drained, or 2 cups cooked dried beans**

**1 lb. kale, rinsed, stems removed, leaves torn into bite-size pieces (8 cups firmly packed)**

**1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**

**½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest (optional)**

Remove the sausage from its casing and tear it by hand into bite-size pieces. Heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 4- or 5-quart heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the sausage and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the sausage to a plate, leaving any rendered fat in the pot.

Add the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil to the pot, increase the heat to medium high, and add the onion. Cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant and beginning to soften, about 2 minutes. Add the carrot and celery and cook, stirring frequently, until they begin to soften and brown, about 2 minutes more. Be sure to scrape any brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the garlic, pepper flakes, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper and cook, stirring, until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute more. Add the chicken broth and bring to a boil over high heat.

When the broth reaches a boil, reduce the heat to medium, add the sausage along with any collected juices, and half the beans. Mash the remaining beans with a fork or wooden spoon and add them to the pot, stirring to distribute. Stir in the kale, adjust the heat as necessary to maintain a gentle simmer, and simmer until the kale is tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and lemon zest (if using) and season to taste with salt and pepper.

## Soup is an ideal showcase for kale

Bean soup with kale and sausage or cured pork is a Mediterranean standard (see the recipe at left for my take on this favorite), but there are many other delicious soups you can make with this hearty green.

**Add punch to a potato soup.** Build layers of flavor by sautéing pancetta or bacon in a little olive oil until crisp. Remove the meat and cook onion, garlic, and celery until soft. Add diced potatoes and water or a combination of water and broth and simmer until tender. Purée the soup, return the meat to the pot, add lots of chopped kale, and simmer gently until it's tender. Finish with a splash of vinegar or lemon juice.

**For a quick hot-and-sour soup,** sauté some Thai red curry paste in a little oil and then add chicken broth, thinly sliced carrot, and sliced fresh mushrooms. When the broth comes to a simmer, add chopped kale, fresh Asian noodles, and diced firm bean curd. Simmer gently just until the kale is tender and then ladle into bowls and garnish with thin slices of scallion, hot chile pepper, whole cilantro leaves, and a squeeze of lime juice.

**For some down-home goodness,** add chopped kale to a pot of pinto or navy beans long simmered with smoked ham hock, sliced onion, diced canned tomatoes, and a dried hot chile. Continue to simmer until the kale is just tender and serve in bowls with plenty of cornbread to mop up the broth. Garnish with a drizzle of homemade chile or cider vinegar.

*Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦*



The higher the cacao percentage, the stronger the wine should be.

# Wine & Chocolate

Chocolate is one of the hardest foods to pair with wine, but a few simple rules can make it easier

BY TIM GAISER

At least once a month, I get a card or an email inviting me either to attend a chocolate and wine pairing or to teach one. To tell you the truth, this doesn't surprise me that much. With popular consumer companies making high-end chocolate bars, artisanal chocolatiers sprouting everywhere, and some forward-looking restaurants even creating entire tasting menus using chocolate as the main ingredient, there's a lot of excitement surrounding really good chocolate these days. So the idea of pairing good wine with good chocolate is only natural—whether it's a plain chocolate bar, homemade chocolate truffles, or that lovely ganache torte you just baked. (See pp. 69–70 for truffle and torte recipes.) But can it be done successfully? The answer to this question is less than clear cut, because finding wines that go well with chocolate can be a challenge.

The reason it's so tricky is that chocolate, especially dark chocolate, is fairly high in tannins (astringent, bitter-tasting particles that come from the cacao bean) and has varying degrees of sweetness. This bittersweet combination calls for wines that match the intensity of flavor in the chocolate (think bold, full-bodied wines) while complementing the bitter and sweet elements. This is why, as a general rule, the stronger the chocolate—that is, the higher the cacao percentage—the more intense the wine should be for a good pairing.

So while it's true that pairing wine with chocolate requires some thought and preparation, the simple guidelines on the next page will help you find the perfect wine for your favorite chocolate.



# Pairing Tips

## Avoid serving whites or sparklers with chocolate

A chocolate truffle and a glass of bubbly might sound romantic, but the combination can be a recipe for food-and-wine-pairing disaster. The same goes for still white wines. When you combine high-acid, low-tannin dry wines with an intensely flavored bittersweet food like chocolate, the sweetness of the chocolate will render the wine even drier in the mouth and unpalatably sour. The wine won't do the chocolate any favor, either, because there's nothing in it to play off the chocolate's bitter tannins.

If you must have a sparkler with your chocolate, make sure it's a demi-sec or dessert-style sparkling wine such as a Moscato d'Asti or Brachetto d'Aqui, which will at least play off the chocolate's sweetness.

## Select a bold red with medium tannins

While red wine and devil's food cake may seem like a natural combination, only some red wines are good partners for chocolate. The best ones are dry, bold, full-bodied reds with medium tannins that can stand up to chocolate's bitterness (especially semisweet and bittersweet chocolate), such as Cabernets and Merlots. However, for those with a low tolerance for tannins, even these types of reds, with their puckery astringency and lack of sweetness, may prove to be a less than ideal match. Milk chocolate is far less bitter than semisweet or bittersweet, so it's a little more for-

giving and pairs well with even lighter reds with softer tannins. In general, though, the only way to know if red wine with chocolate is for you is to try a variety of chocolates and wines to see if you come up with a combo you like (see the sidebar at right for some suggestions).

## Try a sweet fortified dessert wine

Dessert wines are by far the best wines to pair with chocolate and chocolate desserts. But dessert wines are not all the same, and chocolate works well with only some kinds.

Chocolate rarely pairs well with dessert wines like Sauternes that are made from grapes infected with botrytis, a beneficial mold often referred to as "noble rot," or with passito-style wines made from dried grapes, like Italy's Vin Santo. These wines lack the necessary tannins to go with chocolate's bitter elements.

Sweet fortified dessert wines, on the other hand, are a terrific match for chocolate. A fortified wine is one that's made "stronger" by the addition of a neutral grape brandy as the wine ferments, raising the alcohol content of the finished wine to up to 20%. With their combination of richness, sweetness, and judicious tannins, sweet fortified wines like port (either tawny or ruby), sweet sherry, and sweet Madeira bring out the best in fine chocolate.

## Choose your chocolate, choose your wine

### Milk chocolate

Milk chocolate is the sweetest of all chocolate types, containing more sugar and less cacao (usually about 10%) than darker chocolates. Since milk chocolate is not bitter, you can pair it with dry reds with softer tannins, such as rich Pinot Noirs and lighter Merlots. Young tawny ports and sweeter sherries are always delicious when combined with the silky rich texture of a good milk chocolate.

#### Bottles to try

2006 Beringer Pinot Noir, Napa Valley, \$20

2005 Hahn Estate Merlot, Central Coast, \$14

NV Yalumba Clocktower Tawny Port, Australia, \$14

NV Lustau East India Sherry, \$21

### Semisweet chocolate

With its higher cacao content (at least 35%) and more intense cocoa flavor, semisweet chocolate pairs well with slightly more intense wines, like rich, fruity Zinfandels and Shirazes. Fine, aged tawny ports and simple ruby ports will also match the levels of sweetness and tannins in the chocolate.

#### Bottles to try

2005 Joel Gott Zinfandel, California, \$15

2005 Penfolds Thomas Hyland Shiraz, Australia, \$16

Fonseca Bin 27 Ruby Port, \$16

Graham's 10-Year-Old Tawny Port, \$28

### Bittersweet chocolate

Bittersweet chocolate, with more than 70% cacao, can more than hold its own with tannic reds like Cabernet Sauvignons or bolder Merlots. But good bittersweet chocolate really sings with a fine ruby port, like a late-bottled vintage port or single quinta port. Sweet sherries such as cream sherries, Pedro Ximénez, and Moscatel are also wonderful with bittersweet chocolate.

#### Bottles to try

2004 Dry Creek Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Creek Valley, \$22

Smith Woodhouse "Lodge Reserve" Vintage Character Port, Portugal, \$18

Blandy's Malmsey 5-Year-Old Madeira, \$20

NV Osborne Pedro Ximénez 1827, \$14

*Contributing editor Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier and wine educator.* ♦

# what's new

## A one-piece double boiler

If chocolate desserts are on your Valentine's Day menu, you might want to invest in this new All-in-One Double Boiler by Bonjour. Unlike traditional two-pan double boilers, this 1½-quart pot has an interior water chamber sealed between stainless-steel walls. Via a hole in the handle, you fill the chamber with water, set it on a burner, and wait for a whistle to signal that the water is boiling. You then turn down the heat and add ingredients to melt or cook gently over the indirect heat of simmering water. I liked how it melted chocolate with no scorching and delivered even, low heat for cooking a hollandaise sauce. It's also convenient that the water is sealed in its own compartment, preventing any accidental drips (water can cause chocolate to seize up). The compact, easy-to-store double boiler costs \$40 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com).



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BY LISA WADDLE

## Versatile bakers from All-Clad

From the minute I picked up one of these new All-Clad baking pans, I couldn't wait to try it out. Tri-ply bonded stainless steel with an aluminum core gives each of the pans in this line impressive

heft, and the 8-inch square one I tested produced lovely, even browning on cornbread and brownies. It also performed nicely as a roasting pan, the perfect size for cooking for one or two. The riveted stainless handles make the pans easy to get in and out of the oven (and are particularly useful on the pie plate, where bulky oven mitts can damage a crust). Besides the 8-inch square pan (\$80), the line includes a 9-inch round pan, \$90; a 9x13-inch pan, \$100; a 10-inch pie pan, \$80; and a 12x15-inch shallow baker, \$120. They are sold only at Bloomingdale's stores and at [Bloomingdales.com](http://Bloomingdales.com).







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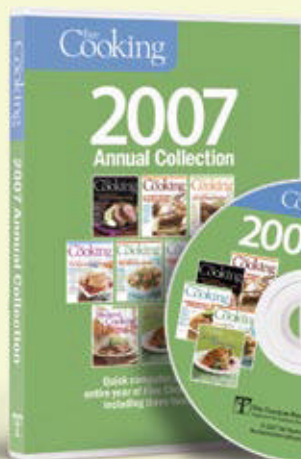
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# All the rage in range hoods

In recent years, range hoods have gone beyond merely clearing the cooking air. Here's a look at some of the newer features you might want to investigate if you're in the market for a new hood:

## Energy efficient

Proving that eco-friendly can be stylish, Faber's **Matrix**, below, is a dramatically different take on a range hood. Air is drawn through the narrow black slots on the nearly flat stainless-steel panel. The design creates an area of low pressure that captures more air, requiring Matrix to use less energy than traditional hoods to extract the same amount of air. Soundproofing material kept the motor amazingly quiet on the showroom model I tried. Retail price is \$2,100, and you can find a dealer by calling Faber at 508-358-5353.



## Adjustable



A big part of confidence in the kitchen is feeling that you have a good fit with your appliances. It's hard to feel that your stove is an extension of yourself, though, if you keep knocking your head on the corner of the range hood. Miele's motorized, height-adjustable hood, above, can help, with its ability to move up and down 12 inches over an island cooktop—perfect for cooks of different heights in the same household. Miele's DA 424V has two buttons that move the hood up or down, four power settings, a timed fan program that turns off in 5- or 15-minute intervals, and a ventilation output of 625 cubic feet per minute. Cost is around \$4,000, and you can find a dealer at Miele.com or by calling 800-843-7231.

Thermador has an unusual slide-out canopy design, right, that lets you push the hood closed for more headroom and pull it out when you need more venting over the front burners. The showroom model I saw glided back and forth with the touch of a finger, instantly increasing the ventilation area by 12 inches, or 45%. The chimney-style wall hood has a maximum airflow of 600 cubic feet per minute, and retails for \$2,000. Find a retailer at Thermador.com.



## Space-saving

This sleek tube-style hood from Sirius, above, may be less than 15 inches across, but it delivers 600 cubic feet per minute of ventilation power. Meant to be used over an island stove, the hood works best over a cooktop no wider than 30 inches. If you've got an extremely wide cooktop, you might consider mounting two of these. The hood retails for \$2,027, and you can find a list of dealers at [Siriushoods.com](http://Siriushoods.com).





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## review

## All-Purpose Tongs

BY LISA WADDLE

**T**ongs should be a cook's best friend, to be used as an extension of your hand to flip a steak, fish an ear of corn out of boiling water, or grab a slice of bacon.

And like a best friend, a set of tongs needs to be reliable, so that you can reach for them with confidence in almost any situation. Who wants to fumble around with multiple pairs, trying to remember which one can handle heavy items and which one is gentle on the salad greens? We certainly don't. So we set out to find the one pair of tongs that could admirably perform a wide range of tasks (see "How we tested," at far right).

You can find tongs in lengths ranging from 6 to 18 inches, but we limited our review to those around 12 inches, as this is the most versatile size. Any shorter and your hand heats up too much over a pan or grill; much longer and they're too awkward for precision work like flipping shrimp.

We tested more than 20 models in the 12-inch range. All were spring-loaded, so you could open and close them with only one hand. And all had a locking mechanism that you push in to close the tongs and pull out to open them.

It was surprising that so many of the tongs, even those that excelled in one area, failed miserably at certain tasks. As a result, we ended up with only three pairs to recommend as capable of performing a range of tasks.

As we put the tongs through their paces, we discovered a few other features that we really like tongs to have:

**Scalloped edges.** The head of the tongs can vary in size, and in shape from square and flat to curved with pronounced teeth. The most common, and most effective, shape was oval with shallow scallops or teeth. The scallops keep a grip on soft foods, but on some models they were too pronounced and tended to tear delicate items.

**Good tension.** One of the biggest comfort factors in tongs is tension: too low and the tongs aren't responsive enough; too high and they quickly tire out your hand. Everyone has a different idea of perfect tension, so we recommend that you try a pair before buying.

**Grippy handles.** Tongs with smooth stainless-steel handles tended to get slippery and weren't as comfortable as those with ribbed plastic or rubber handles.

## Overall favorite

## Oxo Good Grips locking tongs

\$12, [Oxo.com](http://Oxo.com)

A clear favorite, these tongs performed strongly in all our tests and were among the most comfortable. The shallow scalloped edges held a heavy roast securely and were able to lift and hold slippery ramekins. The tension was rated "just right" by most testers. The comfy rubber handles have thumb indentations on both sides and didn't get slippery, even when greasy or wet.



## Silicone-edged tongs

Many tongs are available with nylon or silicone edges, which are less likely than stainless steel to scratch nonstick cookware. The nylon-edged tongs we tried, though, couldn't lift or hold hard objects like ramekins. This is where the silicone-edged tongs shone, with the silicone surface gripping hard, slick surfaces securely. But when it came to precise work, like turning shrimp, most of the silicone-edged tongs proved

clumsy and imprecise, because the silicone edge had too much flexibility.

The stainless-steel-edged tongs in our review proved most versatile, but if you're looking for a second set of tongs to use in your nonstick cookware, we liked the Zyliss Cook-N-Serve ones pictured at left (available at [Target.com](http://Target.com), \$15). They had a comfy grip, and the teeth inside the steel-boned silicone edge helped with precision work.





## Runners-up

### Messерmeister locking tongs

\$10, [Cookescutlery.com](http://Cookescutlery.com)

The head of these tongs is slightly flatter than that of the top-ranked Oxo, which gave them a less secure grip on heavy, awkward objects like a roast. Yet with small items, they were precise and delicate, even when moving quickly over the heat of the grill. They handled wet ramekins with little slippage, and they had a good level of tension. The ribbed rubber on the handles made for a nice, comfortable grip.

### Chantal kitchen tongs

\$17, [Chantal.com](http://Chantal.com)

These tongs were the only ones that strayed from the standard straight-arm design. Though the slightly curved arms didn't seem to offer any unusual benefit, these tongs did a good job with both the heavy roast and the ramekins and also proved gentle and precise when handling smaller food. The tension was on the high end, which some staffers found uncomfortable, and the handles aren't cushioned.

## How we tested

We tested 21 stainless-steel-edged tongs about 12 inches long; all were locking and spring-loaded. We assessed their performance in the following areas:

**Strength:** We used the tongs to lift and turn a 4½-pound beef roast. We were looking for a secure hold with no buckling or slippage.

**Grip:** To see how firmly they could grip hard slippery items, we used the tongs to remove ramekins from a water bath. To test how gentle the tongs could be, we lifted cooked spaghetti from boiling water. We also put them to task in quickly turning oiled zucchini slices on a hot grill to see how nimbly they handled in a high-heat situation.

**Precision:** We used the tongs to turn shrimp in a sauté pan and to plate dressed salad greens.

**Design and construction:** Our staff assessed the comfort of the handles, the functionality of the locking mechanism, and the feel of the tongs in the hand.

*Lisa Waddle is an associate editor.* ♦



## Winning tip

### Spaghetti replaces toothpick

I like to make stuffed chicken breasts and have found that a short piece of uncooked dried spaghetti easily punctures the meat and substitutes nicely for a toothpick to secure the flaps of meat. When the dish is finished, the spaghetti is cooked, and you don't need to worry about removing it (or forgetting to take out the toothpick).

—Matt Pinnow, Atlanta, Georgia

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*The prize for this issue's winner: a seven-piece pressure cooker set from Fagor; retail value, \$149.99.*



**Vote** Help us pick the winning reader's tip for future issues; go to [finecooking.com/vote](http://finecooking.com/vote)



### Easier lemon juicing

I find that the metal squeeze-type lemon juicers extract the most juice, but sometimes the thickness of the fruit's skin can make it difficult to squeeze the handles. Slicing off a bit from each end of the lemon before cutting it in half to put in the juicer makes it easier to squeeze.

—Dottie Ubrich, Crofton, Maryland

### Brine adds flavor

Whenever I make something with capers or olives, I sprinkle a little of the brine from the jar on the food for an extra flavor boost. Most of the brines are salty, so I reduce the amount of salt in the dish.

—Kelly Jacobson, Atlanta, Georgia

### Cookie cutters keep eggs from cracking

To keep eggs from cracking when boiling them, I put each one in a small metal cookie cutter in the saucepan. The cutters keep the eggs from banging into one another, and I never get cracked eggs.

—Dorothy Halberg, Battle Ground, Washington

### Stop prosciutto from sticking

To make a julienne of prosciutto, I stack thin slices and cut them crosswise. However, they tend to stick together and quickly turn into a glob. I've found that if I put some fresh herbs between the slices of prosciutto and then cut, the thin strips separate nicely. Often the recipe calling for the prosciutto calls for some type of herb as well, but even if it doesn't, the extra flavor doesn't hurt.

—Suzanne Kosovich, Greenfield, Indiana

### Protect fruit from bruising

Here's a way to reuse the bubble wrap that comes in packages. I line the bottom and sides of my refrigerator's crisper drawer with the sheets, which keep my fruits and vegetables from getting bruised.

—Karen Ann Bland, Gove, Kansas



## Post-it note keeps place in recipe

There's nothing worse than skipping a line in a recipe or getting distracted and losing your place. I've found that a small Post-it note helps me keep my place. I stick it under the line I'm reading so that I can immediately see where I am, then move it down as I add each ingredient or complete each instruction.

—Linda Burke, Denton, Texas

## Store electric knife blades in paper towel tubes

I've hit upon a way to store the blades of my electric knife that keeps them sharp and protects my hands from being cut. I flatten paper towel tubes and store each blade in its own tube. You can even label the outside of the tube with the length and type of blade.

—Deborah Tarentino,  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

## Skewer and clothespin hold recipe in view

When I'm following a recipe, I like to have the card or piece of paper in my line of sight yet out of the way of splatters and spills. I've found a way to do this using a skewer and a clothespin or plastic spring clip. I run the skewer through the spring of the clothespin and rest the skewer, with the clothespin in the center, on two adjacent upper cabinet handles. I then clip my recipe so that it's suspended at eye level.

—Margie Kelland,  
St. John's, Newfoundland



## STAFF CORNER



## Perfect piecrust overhang

When measuring the overhang on a piecrust (before you fold it under and crimp it) press the piecrust against the end of the ruler just enough to mark the correct measurement in the dough. Do this at intervals all the way around and then follow the marks to cut the crust evenly with kitchen scissors to the correct overhang. That way the crust will be an even thickness when you fold it under and crimp it.

—Allison Ehri Kreitler,  
Fine Cooking test kitchen  
associate and food stylist

## Baking sheets go beyond cookies

I keep several heavy-duty rimmed baking sheets in my kitchen and use them for much more than just baking. When I'm defrosting meat, I put the package on a baking sheet to catch any drips. I also use one to hold a cutting board when I'm cutting up chicken or meat; the rimmed sheet catches any juices. Lined with foil, they make roomy trays to transport meat and vegetables to the grill, and they can even serve as platters.

—Debi Karavites, via email

## Substitute bread peel

The other day I had bread that needed to go in the oven, but I couldn't remember where I had stored my bread peel. I had a clipboard made of Masonite hardboard handy and found it filled in wonderfully. It takes a dusting of flour, and it easily slipped beneath the dough. Best of all, the clipboard is easy to clean.

—Denise Runde, Madison, Wisconsin

## Use both ends of pestle for crushing

I read your review of mortars and pestles (*Fine Cooking* #88) and was pleased to see that the one I own, the Thai granite one, was mentioned as your favorite. Here's a way to get the most out of this tool: I've found that when crushing hard spices like black peppercorns, it's easier to turn the pestle over and use the small end. This way, you can exert more pressure on the small peppercorns, and it's easier to break them.

—Glenn Baglo, via email

## Crush crackers to replace breadcrumbs

I've found that saltines crushed in a plastic bag with a rolling pin make a great replacement for breadcrumbs. The result is a lighter, crisper crust, especially when breading fish fillets. I prefer the texture to that of breadcrumbs and now use crushed crackers in any recipe that calls for breadcrumbs.

—Irene Moretti, Ridgeville, Ontario ♦



# Meatloaf Makeovers

We asked three chefs for their versions of this comforting favorite and got surprisingly different—and delicious—results

COMPILED BY DENISE MICKELSEN

A plate of piping hot meatloaf with gravy is hearty home cooking at its best, and everyone has a favorite—or at least familiar—recipe. But sometimes familiar isn't good enough. We want new flavors, exciting combinations, and special techniques. To get you started, we asked three chefs to develop their own tasty spins on the traditional meatloaf. Whether you're craving something tender and juicy, earthy and decadent, or warmly spiced and tangy, you'll find that one of their versions is your new favorite.

Jessica Bard, cookbook author and culinary instructor, wowed us with her bacon-wrapped meatloaf served with a zesty mushroom gravy spiked with sherry. New York City chef Alexandra Guarnaschelli uses the classic combination of beef, pork, and veal in her meatloaf, but she veers off the beaten path by adding sour cream for richness and scallions and herbs for freshness. Finally, Suvir Saran, of Dévi restaurant in New York City, spices up his version with the warm Indian flavors of coriander, cumin, and ginger. Mushrooms, peppers, and a sweet and spicy glaze step up the moisture and tang.



## For rich, earthy flavor, add bacon and mushrooms

For my version of this classic comfort food, I focused on the flavors of mushrooms, sherry, and bacon. For sweetness and tang, I quickly marinated raw minced onions, mushrooms, and garlic in sherry and then added the mixture, plus Worcestershire and brown sugar, to the meat. Instead of using bread-crumbs as my binder, I tore bread into small pieces so they would provide delicious pockets of softness in each slice of meatloaf. For a decadent touch, I wrapped the meatloaf in bacon and then used a bit more bacon to make a velvety mushroom gravy. It's a perfect sauce for the meatloaf and works really well with a side of mashed potatoes, too.



*Jessica Bard is a culinary instructor, cookbook author, and food stylist. She teaches hands-on cooking classes at Warren Kitchen and Cutlery in Rhinebeck, New York.*

## Bacon-Wrapped Meatloaf

*Serves eight.*

**4 oz. cremini (baby bella) or white mushrooms, cleaned and finely chopped (1 1/3 cups)**  
**1/2 cup minced yellow onion**  
**3 Tbs. dry sherry**  
**1 Tbs. minced garlic**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 oz. day-old rustic or dense white bread, torn into about 1/2-inch pieces (1 1/2 cups)**  
**1/4 cup whole milk**  
**1 large egg, lightly beaten**  
**1 lb. ground beef (85% lean)**  
**1/2 lb. ground veal**  
**1/2 lb. ground pork**  
**2 Tbs. light or dark brown sugar**  
**1 Tbs. Worcestershire sauce**  
**8 slices center-cut bacon**  
**Mushroom Gravy (recipe at right)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

In a medium bowl, toss the mushrooms with the onion, sherry, garlic, 1 1/2 tsp. salt, and 1/2 tsp. pepper.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the bread, milk, and egg. Stir well, lightly mashing the bread until most of the liquid is absorbed. Add the beef, veal, pork, brown sugar, Worcestershire, and the onion-mushroom mixture. Using a large, sturdy wooden spoon or your hands, gently mix just until all the ingredients are blended; you may need to push the meat against the side of the bowl to get the pieces to break up.

Put the meat mixture in a 9x13-inch metal baking pan. Shape the mixture into a rectangular loaf about 10x4 inches. Wrap the strips of bacon around the loaf crosswise, overlapping them slightly and tucking the ends securely under the loaf. Pat the loaf back into shape if necessary. You can form the meat-

loaf up to 8 hours ahead and refrigerate until ready to bake.

Bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of the loaf reads 160°F, 60 to 70 minutes. Take the meatloaf out of the oven and position the oven rack about 6 inches from the broiling element. Heat the broiler to high. Broil the meatloaf until the bacon is brown and crisp, about 3 minutes. Let the loaf rest at room temperature for at least 10 minutes.

Use two flat spatulas to transfer the meatloaf to a serving platter. Slice and serve with the mushroom gravy.

## Mushroom Gravy

*Serves eight.*

This gravy can be made up to 1 day ahead and reheated over medium-low heat.

**1 cup lower-salt beef or chicken broth; more as needed**  
**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**2 slices center-cut bacon, minced**  
**6 oz. cremini (baby bella) or white mushrooms, cleaned and sliced about 1/8 inch thick (2 packed cups)**  
**1/2 cup minced yellow onion**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 Tbs. dry sherry**  
**3 Tbs. all-purpose flour**

Combine the broth with 1 cup of hot water. Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the bacon and cook, stirring to break apart the pieces, until just starting to crisp, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms, onion, 1/2 tsp. salt, and 1/2 tsp. pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the mushrooms have cooked through and start to brown the bottom of the pan, 5 to 8 minutes.

Add the sherry and stir to release the browned bits from the bottom of the pan, about 1 minute. Sprinkle in the flour and stir constantly until the mixture has browned and is slightly dry and crumbly, about 30 seconds.

Whisk in half of the broth mixture and continue whisking until the liquid is absorbed into the flour, about 30 seconds. Whisk in the remaining broth mixture and bring the gravy to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 5 to 10 minutes.

Season to taste with salt and pepper and thin with water or broth if necessary. Transfer to a small saucepan, cover, and keep warm. Reheat the gravy if necessary before serving.

## flavor tip



To bump up both flavor and moisture, wrap the meatloaf with bacon.

## Meatloaf with Fresh Scallions & Herbs

*Serves eight.*

You can shape the raw meatloaf up to 1 day ahead. Refrigerate it overnight to meld the flavors for a tastier meatloaf the next day.

**1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. vegetable oil; more as needed**  
**1 cup finely chopped yellow onion**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  lb. ground beef (80% lean)**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  lb. ground veal**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  lb. ground pork**  
**1 tsp. sweet paprika, preferably Hungarian**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 large eggs, lightly beaten; 1 more if needed**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  cups homemade dry breadcrumbs or panko breadcrumbs; more if needed**  
**1 cup thinly sliced scallions (both green and white parts)**  
**1 cup sour cream**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
 **$\frac{2}{3}$  cup ketchup**  
 **$\frac{1}{3}$  cup chopped fresh tarragon**  
**1 tsp. lightly chopped fresh thyme**  
**2 cloves garlic, finely chopped**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool.

Put the ground beef, veal, and pork in a large bowl and gently knead them with your hands until just combined. Add the cooled onion, paprika, 2 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. pepper and gently knead to blend. Add the remaining ingredients (except for the remaining vegeta-

ble oil) and gently knead with your hands or stir with a large spoon until just incorporated.

Wipe out the skillet and heat the remaining 1 tsp. oil over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add a quarter-size piece of the meat and cook, turning halfway through cooking, until the meat is cooked through, about 1 minute on each side. Cool briefly and taste. If it's too moist to hold together, add up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup more breadcrumbs to the meat mixture; if it's too dry, add an extra egg. If necessary, add salt and pepper. Repeat cooking quarter-size pieces of the meat until you're satisfied with the flavor and consistency.

On a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet, mold the meat mixture into a 9x5-inch loaf. Bake until the meat is firm to the touch and has an internal temperature of 160°F, about 1 hour. Allow the meatloaf to rest for 15 to 20 minutes before serving.

### flavor tip



To check for seasoning, cook a tiny portion of the meatloaf mixture before baking.

### For moist meatloaf, sour cream is the secret

Meatloaf is truly a part of our American culinary repertoire, and as such, I take it seriously. For this recipe, I wanted to combine the tanginess of ketchup with the creaminess of sour cream and the freshness of scallions and tarragon. The scallions add a particularly nice bite without being overbearing or too oniony, and the sour cream makes this loaf super moist. Whenever I make meatloaf, I sauté a tiny portion of the meat mixture before I form the loaf so I can taste it and make sure the seasoning is correct. Serving meatloaf with mashed potatoes is classic, but I prefer something with a bit more textural contrast, such as wilted hearts of romaine lettuce with a splash of balsamic vinegar or al dente orzo seasoned with freshly grated Parmigiano.



*Alexandra Guarnaschelli*  
is executive chef at Butter Restaurant  
and a chef-instructor at the Institute  
of Culinary Education, both in New  
York City.





## For a twist, use Indian spices and a tangy glaze

Inspired by my friend Richard Arakelian's recipe, this meatloaf features toasted breadcrumbs and mushrooms, which add welcome moisture, and warm Indian spices like garam masala, coriander, and cumin, which add an unexpected earthy undertone. Try to handle the meat as gently as possible when forming the loaf so that the mixture remains tender and light. Brushed with a spicy-sweet glaze (made from ketchup, Worcestershire, and spices), this recipe always puts happy smiles on the faces of my guests. I love it served with spiced roasted cauliflower or even potato salad.



*Suvir Saran is executive chef and owner of New York City's Dévi restaurant and has just published his second cookbook, American Masala.*



## Glazed Meatloaf with Peppers & Warm Spices

*Yields two meatloaves, each serving eight.*

If you plan to freeze one of the meatloaves from this recipe, you'll need to make only a half-recipe of the glaze. To freeze, shape a loaf on its own parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Cover loosely with plastic and freeze until firm. Wrap in the parchment and then wrap tightly in foil. It will keep for 1 month. To bake, unwrap the frozen loaf, transfer to a rimmed baking sheet lined with fresh parchment, and thaw completely overnight in the refrigerator. Bake as directed.

### FOR THE MEATLOAVES:

- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter**
- ½ cup fresh breadcrumbs**
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced (about 2 cups)**
- 3 Tbs. canola oil**
- Kosher salt**
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced**
- 1 small green bell pepper, finely diced**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 Tbs. ground coriander**
- 1 tsp. ground cumin**
- 1 tsp. cracked black pepper**
- 1 lb. white button mushrooms, finely diced or finely chopped in a food processor**
- ½ tsp. cayenne**
- 1 tsp. garam masala**
- 2 lb. ground beef (80% lean)**
- 1 lb. ground pork**
- 1 lb. ground turkey**
- 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped**
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped**
- 3 large eggs**
- ½ cup ketchup**

**2 oz. (1½ cups) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**

**½ tsp. sweet or hot paprika, preferably Hungarian**

### FOR THE GLAZE:

- 1 cup ketchup**
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce**
- 2 tsp. ground coriander**
- 1 tsp. ground cumin**
- 1 tsp. cracked black pepper**
- ½ tsp. cayenne**

**Make the meatloaves:** Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the breadcrumbs and toast, stirring constantly, until deeply browned, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl to cool. Wipe the skillet clean.

In the skillet, combine the onion, oil, and 2 tsp. salt. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until the onion is soft and just starting to brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the ginger and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the green bell pepper and garlic and cook until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the coriander, cumin, and cracked pepper and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of the skillet for 1 minute to diffuse the spices.

Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring often, until they release their liquid and the liquid has evaporated, 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in the cayenne and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in the garam masala, turn off the heat, and set aside to cool.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F. Add the beef, pork, turkey, red bell pepper, cilantro, eggs, ketchup, Parmigiano, and paprika to the bowl with the

## flavor tip



For deeper flavor, toast the breadcrumbs in butter before adding them to the mix.

breadcrumbs and knead gently until everything is incorporated. Add the cooled mushroom mixture and knead gently until combined. Divide the mixture in half. On a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet, mold the meat into two 9x5-inch loaves and bake for 1 hour.

**Make the glaze:** While the meatloaves bake, whisk the glaze ingredients in a small bowl. After 1 hour of baking, remove the meatloaves from the oven. Evenly brush the glaze over each meatloaf and continue to bake until an instant-read thermometer reads 165°F when inserted into the center of a meatloaf, 30 to 40 minutes more. Let the meatloaves cool for 15 minutes before moving to a platter or cutting board with a large spatula (leave the juices and fat behind). Slice and serve. ♦

# Red, White & Purple

Small, colorful potato varieties are surprisingly versatile—try three delicious recipes to learn how best to cook them

BY MOLLY STEVENS

**B**ack in 1998 when I signed on to co-write a potato cookbook, I did so with some trepidation. I liked potatoes well enough, but I was nervous about the possibility of spud overload. In the end, I had the opposite experience: I went from simply liking potatoes to loving them.

The process of developing all those recipes (there are 300 in the book) forced me to go beyond the realm of russets and Red Bliss to discover and appreciate other, more interesting varieties, like fingerlings (so named for their knobby, narrow shapes reminiscent of fingers) and the oh-so-cute little red, white, purple, and Yukon Gold potatoes. In addition to their charming shapes, diminutive sizes, and pretty colors, they have incredible flavor and appealing textures—and they're increasingly available at the grocery store. If you've bypassed them because you weren't quite sure how to cook them, I urge you to pick up a couple of pounds next time you're shopping and discover just how good they can be.

**Red, white, and yellow potatoes are dense and creamy and extremely versatile.** With the exception of purple potatoes,

most small potatoes can be classified as waxy, which means they tend to have a firm, dense, creamy texture, and they hold their shape well when cooked, making them ideal for salads and for braising, roasting, and sautéing—but not for mashing, where you want fluffier potatoes, like russets. Baby whites and reds are the creamiest of the bunch. They have a mild, sweet flavor that adapts well to just about any seasoning. Baby Yukon Golds and fingerlings are still considered waxy, but their texture is a bit drier, with a richer, fuller flavor.

I like to braise fingerlings (as on p. 42) because the simplicity of this technique shows off the potatoes' rich flavor. I also like the way baby red and white potatoes get all creamy inside when roasted. And I use baby Yukons for the salad on p. 43 because their buttery flesh stands up to the sharp vinaigrette and chopped bacon. But these potatoes are so versatile, you'll get equally satisfying results if you braise Yukon Golds, roast fingerlings, or make a salad with baby reds and whites.

**Purple potatoes are drier and denser and are best roasted or sautéed.** Purple potatoes (sometimes called blue potatoes), including purple Peruvian fingerlings, stand slightly apart in taste and texture. They have a nice earthy flavor, but their relatively low moisture content makes them drier, almost like a russet. This means that purple potatoes are more likely to fall apart when cooked, so you need to pay extra attention when braising or boiling them for salads. They're at their best sautéed or roasted, because they become wonderfully crisp on the outside and dry and soft inside.





## Cooking a colorful potato medley

Many cooks like to toss together two or three small potato varieties for a colorful dish. And I do, too—but with a few caveats. Baby reds, whites, and Yukon Golds all have similar textures and cooking times, so they cook beautifully together. Fingerlings, with their odd shape, tend to cook at a different rate and are best cooked alone. So are purple potatoes, which fall apart more easily when boiled or braised. Roasting is the one technique where you can mix all varieties with no worries, as they roast more or less at the same rate.

## Look for heirlooms

If you shop at a farmers' market or specialty food store, you may find an even greater variety of potatoes than the ones we use here. Lately, potato growers are expanding their offerings to include colorful varieties with winsome names like Rose Finn Apple, Butterball, Nosebag, Ozette, Ruby Crescent, and Désirée. For the most part, these new-sounding spuds are actually antique varieties (thus referred to as heirlooms) that are coming back into fashion. For cooking purposes, heirloom potatoes tend to range from small to medium, with low to medium starch content. They are perfectly suited to all the recipes here.



## Roasted Baby Red, White & Purple Potatoes with Rosemary, Fennel & Garlic

*Serves four to six.*

If you're making this as a side dish for a roast, you can lower the oven to 350°F or raise it to 400°F to suit your main course. The potatoes will take a little more or less time to cook accordingly. You can roast a medley of reds, whites, and purples or just one variety alone. You can also use any variety of fingerling potatoes—just cut them into 1-inch pieces first.

**1¾ lb. baby red, white, or purple potatoes, or a combination, scrubbed and halved**

**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary**

**2 tsp. fennel seeds, crushed in a mortar or coarsely ground in a spice grinder**

**Pinch crushed red pepper flakes  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**12 large cloves garlic, peeled and trimmed**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

In a large bowl, toss the potatoes with the olive oil, rosemary, fennel seeds, red pepper flakes, ½ tsp. salt, and a few generous grinds of pepper. Arrange them cut side down in a well-spaced single layer on a rimmed baking sheet or in a shallow roasting pan, making sure to scrape out and include any herbs and oil stuck to the bowl. Roast for 20 minutes and then stir the potatoes with a spatula and scatter the garlic cloves over them.

Continue roasting, stirring every 15 minutes, until the potatoes are tender enough to pierce easily with a skewer and the skins are browned all over, crisp, and bit shriveled, about 45 minutes more. Serve immediately.



## Braised Fingerlings with Thyme & Butter

*Serves four to six.*

This recipe is ripe for interpretation. Swap out the thyme for another favorite herb, such as rosemary or bay. Use olive oil in place of butter. And for a richer flavor, braise the potatoes in lower-salt chicken broth instead of water.

**1¾ lb. fingerling potatoes, scrubbed**

**6 large sprigs fresh thyme**

**3 to 4 Tbs. unsalted butter**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Leave the potatoes whole if less than 1 inch in diameter; halve them lengthwise if fatter. Arrange the potatoes in a single layer in a 12-inch skillet. They will be crowded, but they shouldn't be stacked. Tuck the thyme sprigs between the potatoes. Cut 3 Tbs. of the butter into 3 pieces. Add the butter, ¾ tsp. salt, and a few generous grinds of pepper to the potatoes.

Pour over just enough water to almost cover the potatoes (about 2 cups). Partially cover and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Simmer, stirring gently once or twice, until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a skewer, about 25 minutes. (If the water threatens to dry up before the potatoes are tender, add another ½ cup.)

Transfer the potatoes to a serving dish with a slotted spoon. Increase the heat to high and boil the remaining liquid, uncovered, until it's reduced to a buttery glaze, 5 to 8 minutes, depending on the amount of liquid. Remove the thyme sprigs (most of the leaves will have fallen off). If you would like a richer sauce, swirl in the remaining 1 Tbs. butter. Pour the glaze over the potatoes and serve immediately.



**tip:** The skin on some small potatoes, especially fingerlings, can be tough and slightly bitter when boiled. When making a salad, taste the skin after you've drained the potatoes. If it's too hard or strong tasting, scrape it off with a paring knife.





## Are these “baby” or “new” potatoes?

Grocery stores often use the terms “baby” and “new” interchangeably when identifying small potatoes, whether red, white, yellow, or purple. But neither term is accurate. These potatoes may be diminutive, but they’re no younger than their larger counterparts. This is because every potato plant produces full-size spuds along with a few smaller ones, which are mature and fully grown, just not as big as the others. Nevertheless, we call for baby potatoes here because that’s how you’ll find them at the grocery store.

True “new” potatoes are young potatoes that have just been dug from the ground. They have paper-thin skins and are as perishable as spring onions and summer squash. About the only place you’ll find new potatoes is at a summertime farmers’ market or in your own garden. Most potatoes you find in grocery stores are harvested when they’re mature and are held in a humid place at temperatures between 45° and 60°F for about two weeks. This process, called curing, thickens their skins and heals minor bruises incurred during harvest, making them last longer.



### Baby Yukon Potato Salad with Shallots, Chives, Bacon & Lemon Vinaigrette

*Serves four to six.*

This salad is best served soon after it’s made. If you must refrigerate it, let it return to room temperature before serving.

**1¾ lb. baby Yukon Gold potatoes, scrubbed**  
**Kosher salt**  
**4 strips bacon**  
**¼ cup minced shallot (from 1 large shallot)**  
**2 Tbs. cider vinegar or white-wine vinegar**  
**1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
**2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**  
**½ tsp. granulated sugar**  
**¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**3 Tbs. chopped fresh chives**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

Put the potatoes in a 4- to 5-quart saucepan and cover by about 2 inches with cold water. Add 1 Tbs. salt and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil gently until the potatoes are tender enough to pierce easily with a skewer, about 20 minutes. Don’t overcook them or they will fall apart.

Meanwhile, put the bacon slices in a cold 10-inch skillet and cook over medium heat, turning occasionally,

until crisp, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate, reserving the drippings. Coarsely chop or crumble the bacon and set aside.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine the shallot, vinegar, lemon juice, lemon zest, sugar, and ½ tsp. salt.

Drain the potatoes in a large colander and let them cool slightly. When the potatoes are cool enough to handle, cut in half any that are larger than a walnut. Taste a bit of potato skin: If it’s bitter or feels tough, peel all the potatoes with a paring knife.

Drop the potatoes into the bowl with the shallot mixture. Add the olive oil, 2 Tbs. of the chives, 1 Tbs. bacon drippings, and the chopped bacon. Toss to combine. (It may appear that there’s too much dressing, but it will be absorbed.) Let the salad sit for 20 minutes. Season to taste with black pepper and more salt, if necessary. Sprinkle with the remaining 1 Tbs. chives. Serve warm or at room temperature.

*Molly Stevens, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is an award-winning cookbook author and cooking teacher. ♦*





# Fast & Flavorful Vegetable Sautés

An easy technique guarantees  
a tasty side dish in less than  
30 minutes

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON





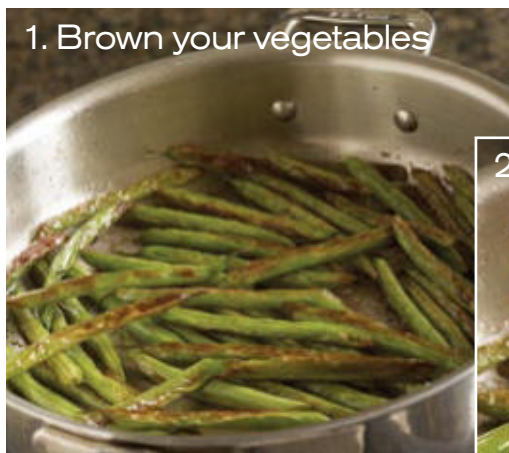
I'm sorry, but you no longer have any excuses. That boring steamed broccoli has got to go. Because making a fast and flavorful vegetable side dish on a weeknight is not hard. The technique I'm going to show you here is straightforward, the vegetables—carrots, green beans, or mushrooms—don't take much time to prep, and you don't need to have a lot of exotic ingredients on hand. Best of all, the results are delicious.

**Brown is my favorite color.** The editors here at *Fine Cooking* like to give me a hard time about how much I love to brown my food. The reason I do this is that I have a sweet tooth, and when you sauté vegetables over fairly high heat, not only do they brown but their sugars also caramelize. They then taste nutty and sweet. So the first step in these sautés is to brown the vegetables over medium-high heat. Conveniently, the vegetables will also be cooked through by the time they're browned. Just be sure you're using a good-quality sauté pan (see the sidebar on p. 46) and that you don't have your heat up too high, or the vegetables may brown too fast or even burn before they're tender.

**Push the flavors: Add garlic or ginger and a simple glaze.** Once the vegetables are browned, I toss in a bit of minced garlic or ginger (or both), and cook it quickly just until softened and aromatic. (If I added these at the beginning, they'd burn.) Then I add a flavorful mixture of something sweet and something tangy (maple syrup and lime juice or brown sugar and balsamic vinegar, for example) to deglaze

## Three secrets to great flavor

1. Brown your vegetables



2. Toss in an aromatic



3. Deglaze with a flavorful liquid



**tip:** If you don't have a scale, use your sauté pan to measure your vegetables. After trimming, arrange them in the pan. You should have enough to cover the bottom of the pan with some overlapping. The vegetables can be a little overcrowded to start, as they shrink quite a bit when cooked.

## Chinese Restaurant-Style Sautéed Green Beans

*Serves two to three as a side dish.*

Choose young, fresh green beans that are all about the same size for this dish. I think it's easiest to start out stirring the beans with tongs and then switch to a heatproof spatula to add the garlic and sauce. Serve these with roast pork or even as a substantial part of a vegetarian meal.

**1 Tbs. less-sodium soy sauce**  
**1 Tbs. honey**  
**1 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**12 oz. green beans, trimmed**  
**Kosher salt**  
**1 Tbs. minced garlic**

Combine the soy sauce, honey, and 1 Tbs. water in a small dish and set near the stove. Set a shallow serving dish near the stove, too.

In a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan, heat the butter with the olive oil over medium-high heat. When the butter is melted, add the green beans and 1/2 tsp. salt and toss with tongs to coat well. Cook, turning the beans occasionally, until most are well browned, shrunken, and tender, 7 to 8 minutes. (The butter in the pan will have turned dark brown.)

Reduce the heat to low, add the garlic, and cook, stirring constantly with a heatproof rubber spatula, until the garlic is softened and fragrant, 15 to 20 seconds. Carefully add the soy mixture (you'll need to scrape the honey into the pan). Cook, stirring, until the liquid reduces to a glazey consistency that coats the beans, 30 to 45 seconds.

Immediately transfer the beans to the serving dish, scraping the pan with the spatula to get all of the garlicky sauce. Let sit for a few minutes and then serve warm.



the pan. Deglazing is simply the process of unsticking all those good browned bits from the bottom of the pan—you add something liquidy and scrape vigorously. The mixtures I'm adding here deglaze the pan and add flavor to the vegetables while also creating a bit of a glaze to gild your side dish.

**Let them sit.** I find that letting these vegetables sit for five to ten minutes after cooking actually improves their flavor. So not only are these green beans and carrots and mushrooms doable for a weeknight, but they're flexible too. Start prepping and cooking them first, and if your steak or chicken needs time to catch up, they'll be glad to wait patiently.

## The workhorse: Choosing a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan

I was down in the test kitchen the other day, and I noticed that I'm not the only one who loves a heavy-duty straight-sided sauté pan—there were three stacked up right under the stove. Ours (and mine) are all made by All-Clad. They're 10 inches in diameter across the top but are sold as 3-quart pans.

We happen to own the All-Clads because we bought them years ago before a lot of other good pans came on the market, but in a side-by-side review we did in *Fine Cooking* #71, the All-Clad squeaked by three other very good pans, made by KitchenAid, Sur La Table, and Viking, to take the top spot because of its even heating.

Regardless of what brand you buy, make sure your pan is heavy and has an aluminum or copper core sandwiched between its stainless-steel interior and its stainless, aluminum, or copper exterior. The pan should also have a snug lid and stay-cool handles. A pan like this is not inexpensive, but you'll find that you use it constantly, whether you're sautéing onions, searing a chicken breast, making a quick pasta sauce, or braising anything. With its lid and straight sides, it's a must-have for anything that finishes with a sauce.



## Gingery Sautéed Carrots

*Serves two to three as a side dish.*

These carrots have a nice spicy kick, courtesy of the fresh ginger, but a touch of maple syrup mellows them. Try to keep the size of your carrot "sticks" as consistent as possible so they cook at about the same rate; err on the smaller size if you have to.

**1 Tbs. maple syrup**  
**2 tsp. fresh lime juice**  
**2 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 lb. carrots, trimmed, peeled, and cut into sticks about 4 inches long and 1/3 inch wide (see tip, right)**

**Kosher salt**  
**1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**

Combine the maple syrup, lime juice, and 1 Tbs. water in a small dish and set near the stove. Set a shallow serving dish near the stove, too.

In a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan, heat 1 Tbs. of the butter with the olive oil over medium-high heat. When the butter is melted, add the carrots and season with 3/4 tsp. salt. Toss with tongs to coat well. Cook, gently tossing occasionally at first and then more frequently, until most of the carrots are well browned and tender when pierced with a fork, 6 to 9 minutes (if the carrots aren't fully tender but look like they're burning, reduce the heat to medium).

Reduce the heat to low, add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and the ginger



**tip:** To prep the carrots, cut each crosswise into 4-inch lengths and then halve each piece lengthwise. Put each piece on the flat cut side and slice lengthwise 1/3 inch thick.

and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan with a heatproof rubber spatula, until the butter has melted and the ginger is fragrant, 15 to 20 seconds. Carefully add the maple syrup mixture and cook, stirring, until the liquid reduces to a glazey consistency that coats the carrots, 15 to 20 seconds.

Immediately transfer the carrots to the serving dish, scraping the pan with the spatula to get all of the gingery sauce. Let sit for a few minutes and then serve warm.







## Balsamic Sautéed Mushrooms

*Serves four as a side dish.*

Sometimes we forget how versatile sautéed mushrooms are as a side dish. With a slightly tangy balsamic and brown sugar glaze, this yummy version goes well with just about any kind of steak or a seared fish fillet.

**1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar**  
**2 tsp. dark brown sugar**  
**2 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 lb. cremini (baby bella) mushrooms,**  
**cleaned and quartered (see tip, right)**  
**Kosher salt**  
**1 to 2 tsp. minced garlic**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

Combine the balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, and 1 Tbs. water in a small dish and set near the stove. Set a shallow serving dish near the stove, too.

Turn on the exhaust fan. In a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan, heat 1 Tbs. of the butter with the olive oil over medium-high heat. When the butter is melted,

add the mushrooms and  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. salt and stir right away with a wooden spoon until the mushrooms have absorbed all the fat.

Let the mushrooms cook undisturbed for 2 minutes and then stir once. The pan will look dry, but keep the heat at medium high and continue to cook, stirring infrequently, until the mushrooms are shrunken, glistening, and some sides have developed a deep orange-brown color, 6 to 7 minutes more (the bottom of the pan will be brown).

Turn the heat to low, add the garlic and the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and cook, stirring, until the butter is melted and the garlic is fragrant, 15 to 20 seconds. Carefully add the balsamic mixture (you'll need to scrape the brown sugar into the pan with a rubber spatula). Cook, stirring, until the liquid reduces to a glazy consistency that coats the mushrooms, 15 to 20 seconds. Season with a few grinds of pepper.

Immediately transfer the mushrooms to the serving dish, scraping the pan with a rubber spatula to get all of the garlicky sauce. Let sit for a few minutes and then serve warm.



**tip:** Use a soft brush or a paper towel to brush dirt from the mushrooms. Don't rinse—wet mushrooms won't brown as well.

*Susie Middleton is the editor of Fine Cooking. ♦*

# One Great Macaroni & Cheese

BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

## And Three Ways to Spin It

**W**hat's your notion of the ideal macaroni and cheese? I asked some friends this question, figuring they might have differing opinions on this iconic comfort food. But their answers were all similar: Rich, smooth, velvety, and above all, cheesy. Just the right amount of sauce, they said, not too dry but not swimming in it, either. "And it had better have a crunchy crumb topping," said my friend Dave. So here you go, Dave and everyone else: macaroni and cheese with all of the above.

**Believe it or not, macaroni and cheese has gourmet underpinnings.** The cheese sauce is actually a version of béchamel sauce, one of the five major sauces in classical French cuisine. Also called white sauce, it's nothing more than milk thickened with roux (butter and flour) and in my recipe flavored with onion, thyme, and bay leaf. Add cheese and the French would call it Mornay sauce. I like to add a little Dijon, Worcestershire, and Tabasco, too—each boosts the cheese flavor in its own way.

**Three cheeses for three reasons.** Extra-sharp cheddar is the big cheese here—I use the sharpest I can find. It has loads of flavor, so you don't have to use lots of it to taste it, as you might with a milder cheese. That said, I also like to use some mild Monterey Jack because it melts beautifully and gives the sauce a velvety feel. And to the crumb topping I add a little Parmigiano-Reggiano for its salty edge and the distinctive savory flavor it develops as it toasts along with the crumbs.





# Classic Baked Macaroni & Cheese

*Serves six to eight.*

This is great on its own, but if you like to gild the lily, try one of the add-ins below.

## Kosher salt

**6 Tbs. unsalted butter**

**1 medium onion, finely diced**

**6 Tbs. all-purpose flour**

**1 Tbs. Dijon mustard**

**1 quart whole milk, heated**

**1 large sprig fresh thyme, plus 1 tsp. chopped thyme leaves**

**1 bay leaf**

**8 oz. (2 packed cups) grated extra-sharp white Cheddar (the sharpest you can find; I like Cabot's Seriously Sharp Hunter's Cheddar)**

**4 oz. (1 packed cup) grated Monterey Jack**

**½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce**

**½ tsp. Tabasco sauce**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**1 lb. elbow macaroni or other small pasta, such as pipette or small shells**

**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for the baking dish**

**2 cups fresh breadcrumbs**

**1½ oz. (½ lightly packed cup) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**

Heat the oven to 400°F and put a large pot of well-salted water on to boil over high heat.

Meanwhile, in a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven or other heavy-duty pot, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion and ½ tsp. salt and cook, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the flour and cook, stirring, until slightly darker, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the mus-

tard. Switch to a whisk and gradually add the milk, whisking constantly.

When all the milk is in, switch back to the spoon and stir in the thyme sprig, bay leaf, and ½ tsp. salt. Let come to a bare simmer, and cook, stirring frequently, for 15 minutes to meld the flavors (reduce the heat to medium low or low as needed to maintain the bare simmer).

Discard the thyme sprig and bay leaf. Add the Cheddar and Jack cheeses, stirring until melted, and then add the Worcestershire and Tabasco. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm, stirring occasionally.

Cook the pasta in the boiling water until al dente. Pour into a colander and shake it a few times to drain really well. Add the pasta to the cheese sauce and stir until well combined. Generously season to taste with salt and pepper. Lightly oil a 9x13-inch baking dish and spread the pasta in the dish.

In a medium bowl, toss the bread crumbs, Parmigiano, olive oil, chopped thyme, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Scatter the crumbs evenly over the pasta.

Bake in the center of the oven until the crumb topping is golden, about 15 minutes. Let rest for 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

## Single servings:

To bake the macaroni and cheese in individual servings, as we did for our cover, choose small baking dishes that hold 1½ to 2 cups each. You can fill them to within about ½ inch of the rim.

The number of servings will, of course, depend on the volume of your baking dishes. Without any of the add-ins, this recipe yields about 9 cups.

medium-high heat. Drain on paper towels and proceed with the recipe, reducing the heat to medium to cook the onion. Add the ham to the sauce along with the pasta.

## Hot chiles

Cook 2 Tbs. minced fresh serrano chiles along with the onions. Or add ¼ to ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes with the mustard.

## How to make cheese sauce

A great cheese sauce is the basis for flavorful macaroni and cheese, but you can use it in other ways, too—it's delicious served on steamed vegetables or roasted potatoes.



**1.** *Soften onions in the butter and then add the flour and stir for a couple of minutes to cook off the raw flour flavor. Quickly stir in the Dijon.*



**2.** *Gradually whisk in the heated milk. To avoid lumps, go slowly at first, whisking until the mixture is smooth before adding more milk. Once about half the milk is in and the mixture still isn't very thick, you can add the rest more quickly.*



**3.** *After cooking the white sauce long enough to develop its flavor, add the cheese and other flavorings. Stir over the heat just long enough to melt the cheese; any longer and the cheese may get stringy and oily.*

## Add-ins

### Pancetta or bacon

Sauté ¼ lb. pancetta or bacon (finely chopped if using pancetta) until crisp and golden. Drain on paper towels, leaving the fat in the pan. Crumble the bacon. Substitute the fat for part of the butter so that you have about 6 Tbs. total, and proceed with the recipe. Add the pancetta or bacon to the sauce along with the pasta.

### Ham

Brown 2 cups of small-diced smoked ham in the butter over

Jennifer Armentrout is Fine Cooking's senior food editor and test kitchen manager. ♦



# Saucy Chicken



## Mediterranean Chicken with Mushrooms & Zucchini

*Serves four to six.*

Red pearl onions add nice color to this dish, but you can substitute white or yellow pearl onions or even thawed frozen ones.

**3 Tbs. balsamic vinegar**  
**1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary**  
**1 tsp. firmly packed light brown sugar**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1½ cups peeled red pearl onions (6 to 7 oz.), halved if large (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72, for more information)**  
**8 oz. cremini (baby bella) mushrooms, stems trimmed**  
**2 oz. pancetta, cut into ½-inch dice (about ⅓ cup)**  
**4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 serving pieces, trimmed of extra skin and fat, patted dry**  
**2 small zucchini (4 to 5 oz. each), trimmed, cut in half lengthwise and then crosswise into ½-inch-thick half-rounds**  
**½ cup medium- to full-bodied red wine, such as Merlot or Syrah**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

In a small bowl, mix 1 Tbs. of the balsamic vinegar, 1 Tbs. of the rosemary, the brown sugar, ¾ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper; stir to dissolve the sugar and salt. Add the olive oil and mix well.

Scatter the pearl onions over the bottom of a metal, glass, or ceramic baking dish that measures about 10x15x2 inches. Add the mushrooms, cap side up. Stir the vinegar mixture to mix well; spoon 1 Tbs. into a second small bowl and reserve. Use about half of the remaining mixture to brush the mushroom caps. Scatter the pancetta over the mushrooms and onions. Arrange the chicken pieces, skin side up, on top of all, and brush with the remaining vinegar mixture. Roast for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, toss the zucchini with the reserved 1 Tbs. of the vinegar mixture. In a measuring cup, combine the wine with the remaining 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar, 1 tsp.

rosemary, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Remove the roasting pan from the oven and reduce the temperature to 375°F. Pour the wine mixture around the chicken and then scatter the zucchini around the chicken, keeping it toward the edges of the pan as much as possible. Return the pan to the oven and continue to roast until the vegetables are tender and an instant-read thermometer registers 165°F in several pieces of chicken, 20 to 30 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a warmed platter. With a slotted spoon, arrange the vegetables and pancetta around the chicken. Sprinkle the vegetables with a little salt.

Tilt the roasting pan so that the juices gather in one corner. With a large, shallow spoon, skim as much fat as possible from the pan sauce. Spoon a small amount of sauce over the chicken and vegetables. Put the remaining sauce in a pitcher to pass at the table.



# from the Oven

BY MARY ELLEN EVANS

**W**e all love juicy chicken pieces with crisp, bronzed skin, but we don't always have the time to make it happen. Some days, thinking about searing the chicken on the stovetop and then finishing the cooking in the oven seems like just too much work. That's what led me to come up with a method that essentially skips a step: My oven-roasted chicken does away with the stovetop browning. Chicken pieces emerge from the oven with deeply browned skin and succulent white and dark meat, accompanied by a pan full of vegetables and delicious sauce.

How exactly does all of this happen? You start by stirring up a simple sauce, which you brush on the chicken pieces after arranging them in a roasting pan with some vegetables. You begin roasting at a high temperature to brown the skin and then add more vegetables and liquid to the pan and lower the oven temperature to finish cooking. The result is crisp-skinned chicken that's still moist inside. Once you transfer the chicken and vegetables to a platter, you skim the fat from the pan, and you're left with a flavorful sauce.

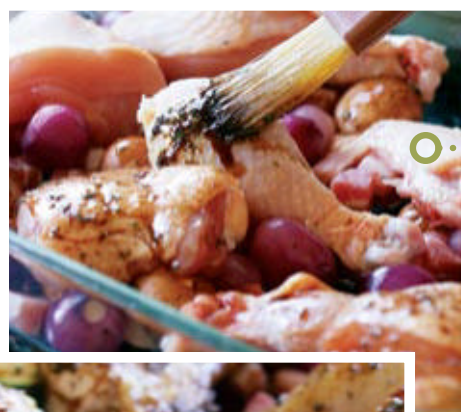
**The size of the pan makes a big difference in this dish.** It should be rectangular and shallow, about 10x15x2 inches. This size is big enough to leave some space between the chicken pieces and around the outside of the pan, which allows the chicken parts to brown. If too crowded, the chicken would collect moisture and steam instead of crisping. Too large a pan, though, would lead to too much evaporation of liquid and leave you without enough sauce at the end. Pyrex makes an inexpensive rectangular glass baking dish that is the perfect size, but you could also use similarly sized pans that are often labeled lasagne pans.

Make sure to trim the excess fat from the chicken pieces and blot them dry with paper towels. Nicely trimmed skin browns and crisps better, plus you'll have less fat to skim at the end. And don't be tempted to skip blotting the chicken with paper towels

A simple hands-off method gives you crisp-skinned chicken pieces along with vegetables and a sauce



Make the sweet and savory coating sauce.



Brush the chicken with the sauce and then put the pan in a hot oven.



Halfway through roasting, add more vegetables and liquid.



Spoon the fat off, and your pan sauce is ready.

to remove any moisture that's accumulated in the packaging. Dry chicken, as with any meat, is critical to browning.

**Coating the chicken pieces with a sugar-based sauce gives a boost to browning the skin.** As we've all learned in baking, sugar delivers wonderfully caramelized taste and color. Each of these recipes starts with a liquid made of sweet and savory ingredients combined with spices and a small amount of oil or butter. Instead of putting a bit of fat in a skillet and sautéing the chicken pieces to crisp them, coating the skin with this liquid and popping it in a hot oven gives a similar result. It's important to use just a small amount, because you want the moisture to evaporate and the skin to crisp.

**Starting the chicken in a hot oven helps get a head-start on browning.** I've found in writing two chicken cookbooks that chicken, like most meat, doesn't do well at extremely high temperatures; 400°F is high enough to brown the skin but not so high that it toughens the meat. Instead of using a rack, I simply layer the chicken, skin side up, on a bed of longer-cooking vegetables and start the roasting process without additional moisture. The dry heat lets the sauce coating begin to evaporate and gets the color off to a good start. Don't worry if the chicken is only slightly brown after 30 minutes. It will keep right on deepening in color through the final baking.

**Dropping the oven temperature halfway through cooking helps ensure juicy chicken.** This is the time to add vegetables or fruits that cook fairly quickly and a good place to add extra seasonings along with the broth, wine, or juices to boost flavor. Everything melds nicely in the last 30 minutes or so, and then you're ready for the final step.

**Making a sauce for the chicken and vegetables couldn't be easier.** Using tongs or a slotted spoon, move the chicken and any vegetables to a platter. Then tilt the pan, wait a few moments for the fat to rise, and spoon it off. Pass the sauce separately with crusty bread to sop it up, and sighs of satisfaction will follow shortly.

Watch a video on how  
to cut up  
a chicken at  
[finecooking.com](http://finecooking.com)



## Pomegranate-Orange Chicken

*Serves four to six.*

Pomegranate and orange juices form the basis for this dynamite chicken dish that echoes eastern Mediterranean flavor combinations.

- 1 large orange, zest finely grated, juiced**
- 1 cup pomegranate juice**
- 1½ tsp. dried thyme leaves**
- ⅛ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 6 tsp. canola oil**
- Kosher salt**
- ¾ cup lower-salt chicken broth**
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces**
- 2 medium parsnips, peeled and sliced on the diagonal ¼ inch thick**
- 1 red onion, peeled and cut into ¾-inch-thick wedges**
- 4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 serving pieces, trimmed of extra skin and fat, patted dry**
- 1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

In a medium saucepan, combine the orange juice and pomegranate juice. Bring to a boil over medium heat and reduce to ¼ cup, about 15 minutes. Add ½ tsp. of the thyme, the cinnamon, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Divide the mixture between two small bowls. To one bowl add

2 tsp. of the oil and ½ tsp. salt. To the other add the chicken broth, all but 1 tsp. of the orange zest, and ¼ tsp. salt.

Scatter the sweet potatoes, parsnips, and onion over the bottom of a metal, glass, or ceramic baking dish that measures about 10x15x2 inches. Toss with the remaining 4 tsp. of oil and 1 tsp. thyme. Arrange the chicken pieces, skin side up, on top of the vegetables and brush with all of the juice-oil mixture. Roast for 30 minutes.

Remove the pan from the oven and reduce the temperature to 375°F. Pour the juice-broth mixture around the chicken pieces and scatter the walnuts around the chicken. Return the pan to the oven and roast until the vegetables are tender and an instant-read thermometer registers 165°F in several pieces of chicken, 20 to 30 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a warmed platter. Use a slotted spoon to arrange the vegetables and walnuts around the chicken. Sprinkle the vegetables with a little salt and sprinkle the remaining orange zest over all. Tilt the roasting pan so that the juices gather in one corner. With a large, shallow spoon, skim as much fat as possible from the pan sauce. Season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper and pour into a pitcher to pass at the table.





## Chicken with Apples & Cider

*Serves four to six.*

I love preparing the classic Norman combination of chicken, apples, and cream during the winter months. This roasted version adds mustard and tarragon for extra depth, plus carrots, fennel, and onion for a one-dish meal.

**½ cup plus 2 Tbs. hard apple cider**  
**2 Tbs. Dijon mustard**  
**1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. chopped fresh tarragon**  
**1 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley**  
**1 Tbs. melted unsalted butter**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced on the diagonal ¼ inch thick**  
**1 small fennel bulb, trimmed, quartered, and cut lengthwise through the core into ½-inch-thick wedges**  
**1 large yellow onion, cut into medium dice**  
**4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 serving pieces, trimmed of extra skin and fat, patted dry**  
**¼ cup crème fraîche**  
**1 tsp. cornstarch**

**½ cup lower-salt chicken broth**

**1 tsp. cider vinegar**

**1 large Granny Smith apple (unpeeled), cored and cut into ½-inch pieces**

**1 large Braeburn apple (unpeeled), cored and cut into ½-inch pieces**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

In a small bowl, mix 2 Tbs. of the cider, 1 Tbs. of the mustard, 1 Tbs. of the tarragon, 2 tsp. of the parsley, the butter, ½ tsp. salt, and ⅛ tsp. pepper.

Scatter the carrots, fennel, and onion over the bottom of a metal, glass, or ceramic baking dish that measures about 10x15x2 inches. Arrange the chicken pieces, skin side up, on top of the vegetables. Brush the cider-mustard mixture over the chicken pieces and roast for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl whisk the remaining ½ cup cider, 1 Tbs. mustard, the crème fraîche, and cornstarch. Whisk in the chicken broth, vinegar, and ½ tsp. salt.

Remove the pan from the oven and reduce the temperature to 375°F. Pour the crème fraîche mixture around the chicken and then scatter the apples around. Return the pan to the oven and roast until the vegetables and apples are tender and an instant-read thermometer registers 165°F in several pieces of chicken, 20 to 30 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a warmed platter. Use a slotted spoon to arrange the vegetables and apples around the chicken. Sprinkle with a little salt and the remaining 1 tsp. tarragon and 1 tsp. parsley. Tilt the roasting pan so that the juices gather in one corner. With a large, shallow spoon, skim as much fat as possible from the pan sauce. Season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper and pour into a pitcher to pass at the table.

*Mary Ellen Evans is a culinary instructor and the author of the cookbooks *Bistro Chicken* and *The One-Dish Chicken Cookbook*. ♦*

# The Best Tomato Soups

For the richest flavor and silkiest texture, start with canned tomatoes

BY PERLA MEYERS

**O**n a visit to Budapest a few years ago I headed to its famous Central Market, a glorious Art Nouveau structure reminiscent of Barcelona's Boqueria Market. I waded among stalls heaped with tomatoes, cabbages, and peppers in every size, and a seemingly endless variety of sausages, my appetite stoked by the aromas of paprika and smoky bacon. Heading toward one of the simple eateries, I was at a loss for what to order until I noticed that almost everyone was having tomato soup.

Once I tasted it, I was sure that the soup's intense flavor had to come from fresh tomatoes. Then I saw the busy cook reach for a couple of giant cans of tomatoes and dump them into a huge pot sizzling with onions and garlic. I was relieved that I wouldn't have to try to sneak Hungarian tomatoes into my suitcase to duplicate the soup at home. On my return to New York, I started my quest for the best canned tomatoes. Once I began cooking, I discovered that recreating this deeply flavored soup was as simple as starting with a sauté of aromatics and finishing with a purée in a blender to create the silky texture.

**Using canned tomatoes takes the guesswork out of these soups.** At this time of year, canned tomatoes taste infinitely better than any fresh ones you'll find in the market. Even during tomato season, canned might be the best option for soup, as you might want to save vine-ripened red beauties for eating raw. Canned tomatoes can be fresh-tasting and firm, but you must choose care-



## Canned whole tomatoes

It's a good idea to taste a few brands of canned tomatoes to find the one you like best. Seek out tomatoes that have a balance of fruity notes and acidity and that are not too salty or processed-tasting. To me, Muir Glen's organic plum tomatoes most closely match the taste of fresh tomatoes.

fully; they vary widely by brand and come in many forms (see "Canned whole tomatoes," above). At first, I tried puréed tomatoes because I was going for a creamy soup, but I found that most brands had a metallic taste. After some experimenting, I found that whole peeled tomatoes give these soups a flavor closest to that of fresh tomatoes.

**Starting with a sauté of aromatics adds complexity to these simple soups.** Cooking onion, garlic, pepper, or celery in a little oil until the flavors are released adds depth to the finished soup. You can change the flavor base by changing the vegetables you use. In my classic version, I call for just onion and garlic; adding celery and red bell pepper boosts the flavor more. And in my Southwest version, I roast the red bell pepper for an added sweetness.

**Puréeing these soups elevates them into something special.** Many traditional creamy soups are thickened with cream, but I've found that a blender creates a light-bodied yet velvety soup. When puréeing hot liquids, though, you do need to take care to prevent an overflow (see "Purée with care," p. 56).

Great served simply, these soups gain an added dimension when topped with a garnish. But these embellishments don't have to be fancy or fussy. My bowl of soup at the Hungarian market needed nothing more than a dollop of sour cream. For a nice textural contrast, you can add a few homemade croutons or crunchy fried tortillas. In the summer, I like to finely dice fresh tomatoes and add a mince of fresh herbs. For garnishes with a few more ingredients, see the box at right.





## Classic Tomato Soup

*Yields about 8 cups; serves eight.*

**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1 large white onion, finely chopped**  
**1 large clove garlic, smashed and peeled**  
**2 Tbs. all-purpose flour**  
**3 cups lower-salt chicken broth**  
**28-oz. can whole peeled plum tomatoes, puréed (include the juice)**  
**1½ tsp. sugar**  
**1 sprig fresh thyme**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 Tbs. thinly sliced fresh basil, chives, or dill, or a mixture of all three (omit if using one of the garnishes below)**

In a nonreactive 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the oil and butter over medium-low heat until the butter melts. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft but not browned, about 8 minutes. Add the flour and stir to coat the onion and garlic.

Add the broth, tomatoes, sugar, thyme, and ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat while stirring the mixture to make sure that the flour is not sticking to the bottom of the pan. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40 minutes.

Discard the thyme sprig. Let cool briefly and then purée in two or three batches in a blender or food processor. Rinse the pot and return the soup to the pot. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Reheat if necessary. Serve warm but not hot, garnished with the herbs or dolloped with one of the garnishes below.

### Add a creamy touch

#### Sour cream, goat cheese & Parmesan garnish

In a small bowl, combine ½ cup sour cream with ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese. Add 1 Tbs. freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, 1 Tbs. thinly sliced chives, and 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil. Mix thoroughly and season to taste with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Add a dollop to each serving.

#### Crème fraîche, herb & horseradish garnish

In a small bowl, combine ½ cup crème fraîche with 1 Tbs. minced fresh dill and 1 Tbs. minced scallion. Add ½ Tbs. well-drained prepared white horseradish and mix well. Season to taste with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Add a dollop to each serving.

## Make ahead

These soups store beautifully and taste better the second day. You can keep them in the refrigerator as long as you bring them to a boil every two days. Or you can stash them in the freezer for up to three months.



## Purée with care

Be sure to purée in small batches and crack the blender lid slightly (or remove the center cap from the lid). Steam can build up once you start blending, and if the lid is on tight or the blender is overfilled, it will spray hot soup all over you and your kitchen. For protection, cover the top with a dishtowel while puréeing.



## Southwest Tomato & Roasted Pepper Soup

*Yields about 5¾ cups; serves five to six.*

**1 large red bell pepper**  
**3 Tbs. plus ½ tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 large yellow onion, finely chopped**  
**1 tsp. chili powder**  
**1 tsp. ground cumin**  
**¼ tsp. ground coriander**  
**3 cups lower-salt chicken broth**  
**28-oz. can whole peeled plum tomatoes, drained and coarsely chopped (reserve the juice)**  
**1 cup small-diced zucchini**  
**½ cup sour cream**  
**1 Tbs. lime juice**  
**½ tsp. finely grated lime zest**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper**  
**2 Tbs. loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves**

Coat the pepper with ½ tsp. of the oil. Roast directly on the grate of a gas burner over high heat or under a broiler, turning the pepper occasionally until charred all over. Put the pepper in a bowl while still hot and cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let rest until cool enough to handle. Stem, seed, and peel the pepper, using a table knife to scrape

away the charred skin. Coarsely chop the pepper and set aside.

In a nonreactive 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the remaining 3 Tbs. oil over medium-low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until just soft, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir the chili powder, cumin, and coriander into the onions. Add the roasted pepper and cook for another minute. Add the broth and tomatoes and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40 minutes.

Let cool briefly and then purée the soup in two or three batches in a blender or food processor. Rinse the pot and return the soup to the pot. If it is too thick, add some of the reserved tomato juice. Add the zucchini and cook for another 10 minutes over low heat.

Meanwhile, combine the sour cream, lime juice, and lime zest in a small bowl.

Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Serve garnished with the lime sour cream and the cilantro leaves.



## Creamy Tomato Soup with Basil Coulis

*Yields about 6½ cups; serves six.*

FOR THE BASIL COULIS:

**1 cup packed fresh basil leaves**  
**1 clove garlic, crushed and peeled;**  
**more to taste**

**Sea salt or kosher salt**  
**¼ cup fruity extra-virgin olive oil, plus**  
**2 Tbs. more if needed**

FOR THE SOUP:

**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped**  
**1 stalk celery, finely chopped**  
**One-half red bell pepper, finely chopped**  
**3 cups lower-salt chicken broth**  
**28-oz. can whole peeled plum tomatoes,**  
**drained and coarsely chopped (reserve**  
**the juice)**

**1 large sprig fresh thyme**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper**

**Make the coulis:** Have ready a medium bowl of ice water. In a small saucepan, bring 1 quart of water to a boil. Add the basil and blanch for 30 seconds. Remove from the water with a strainer or slotted spoon and plunge into the ice water.

Once it's cool, squeeze the basil with your hands to remove excess water. Put the basil in a blender or food processor and add the crushed garlic and a pinch of salt. With the machine running, slowly add ¼ cup of the oil. If the mixture clings to the side of the container, add the remaining 2 Tbs. oil. Purée until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Transfer the coulis to a squeeze bottle or a jar. (The coulis can be made 2 or 3 days ahead and stored in the refrigerator. If making ahead, allow the coulis to come to room temperature before using.)

**Make the soup:** In a nonreactive 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the oil over

medium-low heat. Add the onion, celery, and red pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are quite soft, about 10 minutes. Add the broth, tomatoes, thyme, ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper, and 1 cup water. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40 minutes.

Discard the thyme sprig. Let cool briefly and then purée the soup in two or three batches in a blender or food processor. Rinse the pot and return the soup to the pot. If it is too thick, add some of the reserved tomato juice. Reheat if necessary and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Top each serving with a little coulis.

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*Perla Meyers is the author of six cookbooks, including How to Peel a Peach: And 1,001 Other Things Every Good Cook Needs to Know. ♦*



# Make French Bread at Home

Learn a simple technique for baking light, crusty mini baguettes in your own kitchen

BY ALLISON EHRI KREITLER

I've always wanted to be really good at baking bread, so last spring I was excited to attend a four-day bread class taught by expert baker Richard Bertinet in Bath, England. In Richard's class, you learn to love sticky dough, and love it you must, because in mastering his technique, the dough ends up everywhere: on the walls, the ceiling, your hair, your glasses, and your classmates.

In his class, Richard taught us to "work," not knead, the dough. For him, "knead" is a naughty word, because it means pushing air out of the dough and incorporating more flour. In his method, you use your hands to stretch and aerate the dough without working in any extra flour. This method produces a bakery-quality baguette with a light, airy texture and a crisp crust.

To bring this delicious bread to your kitchen, I've incorporated Richard's teachings into a recipe that works well in a home kitchen, while simplifying a few of the trickier parts. If you've been intimidated by the thought of baking bread, take heart: It's not hard, especially if you follow the steps on the next two pages.

**Cheat—use a stand mixer.** In class, we worked the dough by hand to get a feel for it. But fortunately for those who can't take a class in England (and don't want sticky dough all over the kitchen), there's another way to work the dough—in a stand mixer. Call it cheating, but using

the mixer is easier, and it's nothing to be ashamed of. You can be sure that, with the large amount of dough used every day in a bakery, most professional bakers don't work their dough by hand.

**Make minis.** If you make six small baguettes, you get more practice than when you make just one, and a mistake is less tragic if you have five more chances to get it right. Minis also take less time to bake and are easier to form and handle.

**To bake the bread, use a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet.** It may sound silly, but one of the most difficult parts of my class was getting the bread into the oven using a peel (a wooden board you see pizza makers use) while trying not to let all of the heat out of the oven. You have to be fast, and you need to shake the peel to launch the bread into the oven, which takes a lot of practice and many sacrificial loaves. So at home, I just bake the baguettes on a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet. I found that if you flip the baguettes over partway through baking and then finish them directly on the oven rack, you can still get a pretty good crust—and your odds of accidentally tossing a loaf against the back wall of the oven are slim to nonexistent.

**In addition to a stand mixer, you'll need a few simple pieces of equipment.** A plastic bowl scraper will be your best friend. The curved side perfectly scrapes the dough out of the mixing bowl. The flat side will divide

the dough into pieces and can help loosen it when it sticks to the work surface. You'll need a scale for weighing the flour and water (much more accurate than a volume measure). A flat-weave towel is essential for covering the dough while it rises (a fuzzy towel will give you fuzzy bread). Finally, a spray bottle helps make steam in the oven, slowing the formation of the crust and allowing the dough to expand evenly.

## reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave the Mini Baguettes a real-world test. Here are the results:

*Homemade bread has always seemed daunting to me, but this recipe was so simple. The ingredients were easy to find, and the timetable was very helpful. I loved knowing that I could walk away without worry while the bread rose. And the results: The baguettes looked and tasted better than I ever expected. Slathered with butter, they were absolutely delicious. I was so proud!*

—Jennifer Ramsay,  
Vancouver, British Columbia



## Fresh bread in time for dinner

You can make this bread for a dinner party because most of the preparation time is completely hands off. Follow this timeline to have bread on the table at 7 p.m.:

**1:00–1:15:** Make the bread dough.

**1:15–3:15:** Let the dough rise; go do something else.

**3:15–4:00:** Shape the baguettes.

**4:00–5:30:** Hands off; let the baguettes rise.

**5:30–6:00:** Transfer the baguettes to a baking sheet; slash and bake.

**6:00–7:00:** Let the baguettes cool (and maybe nibble a bit).





## A note about flour

When testing this recipe, we used grocery store bread flour—King Arthur and Gold Medal brands worked fine. Artisan bread flours, on the other hand, may have a higher protein content, which can cause them to absorb more water. If you want to experiment with them, feel free—just note that you might need to add more water to the dough than this recipe requires.

## Mini Baguettes

*Yields 6 mini baguettes.*

For best results, weigh the flour and water. This dough is very sticky, so when working with it, lightly flour your fingers and use only as much flour as you need to keep it from sticking to the work surface. If the dough sticks, use a plastic bowl scraper to loosen it and lightly flour the work surface. To get dough off your fingers, just rub them together with a little flour over the sink or garbage can.

**1 lb. (3½ cups) bread flour; more for dusting**  
**2½ tsp. active dry yeast**  
**1½ tsp. fine sea salt (or table salt)**  
**Semolina (pasta flour) or fine cornmeal for sprinkling on the baking sheet**

Mix the flour, yeast, and salt with a spoon in the bowl of a stand

mixer. Fit the mixer with the dough hook. Weigh 12 oz. (1½ cups) of lukewarm water (when you dip your finger in, it should feel neither hot nor cold) and add it to the flour mixture. Mix on medium-low speed for 1 minute. With a rubber spatula, scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl and the dough hook; the dough will be very sticky. Mix, scraping down the bowl and hook every 2 minutes, until the dough looks smooth and pulls away from the sides of the bowl, about 6 minutes more.

Remove the dough hook and scrape any dough clinging to the hook into the bowl. **1** Using a plastic bowl scraper, scrape all the dough out of the bowl onto a lightly floured work surface. Lightly flour the dough and your fingers. **2** Working around the dough, fold the edges into the middle in about 7 folds, pressing the edge down firmly into the

center of the dough with your fingertips after each fold.

Remove the dough from the work surface, using the bowl scraper to loosen it if necessary, and put it seam side down in a medium bowl. Cover with a linen or other flat-weave towel and let the dough rest in a draft-free spot until roughly doubled in size, 1 to 2 hours.

Line a large (17½ x 13-inch) rimmed baking sheet with a linen or other flat-weave towel and generously flour the entire surface of the towel.

Using the bowl scraper, scrape the dough out of the bowl onto a lightly floured work surface, smooth top side down. Fold one side of the dough into the middle and press down firmly along the length of the seam. Fold in the opposite side and press again firmly along the length of the seam, forming a

## Fold and shape the dough





rectangle. Turn the dough over so the smooth side is up. With the bowl scraper, cut the dough into 6 equal pieces by making one lengthwise and two crosswise cuts. Weigh them; they should each be about 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> oz. Equal them out by cutting a bit off the heavier pieces and tucking it under the lighter pieces.

Make a line of flour on your work surface to dredge the baguettes. Working with one piece of dough at a time, put it smooth side down on a lightly floured work surface. **3** Press it into a rectangle about 1/3 inch thick. **4** Fold a long edge of the dough into the center, pressing firmly with your fingertips along the seam all the way down to the work surface, folding with one hand and pressing with the other, working from one end to the other. Fold the other long edge into the center in the same way.

**5** Continue to fold and press alternate edges until the baguette is 11 to 12 inches long, 5 to 6 folds. **6** Dredge the smooth side of the dough (the seam is on top) in the line of flour. **7** Set the baguette floured side up (seam down) on the towel and make a little fold in the towel to separate it from the next baguette. Repeat with the remaining dough, setting the baguettes on the towel with a fold separating them. Cover with a linen or other flat-weave towel and let sit until roughly doubled in size, 1 to 1½ hours.

While the dough sits, position oven racks in the top and bottom thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 500°F (if you have a convection oven, use it). Have ready a small spray bottle of water.

Generously sprinkle two heavy-duty rimmed baking sheets (with or without sides) with

semolina. When the baguettes are ready, carefully transfer them to the baking sheets with your hands, arranging 3 lengthwise per sheet. With a thin, very sharp knife, make 4 to 5 slashes on a sharp diagonal, 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep, on the tops of each baguette.

Open the oven and quickly spray about 10 squirts of water into the bottom and sides of the oven to make steam. Put the baguettes in the oven, spray again into the bottom and sides of the oven, and quickly close the door to trap the steam. Reduce the oven temperature to 475°F. Bake the baguettes for 6 minutes and then quickly turn them over on their baking sheets. Swap the sheets' positions and bake for another 5 minutes.

Remove the baguettes from their baking sheets and put them scored side up directly on the oven racks (if making the ba-

guettes ahead, don't return them to the oven; see the box below). Bake until the baguettes are dark golden brown, about 5 minutes more. Transfer to a rack to cool.

## make ahead

You can par-bake the baguettes for the first 11 minutes, cool them completely, and freeze for up to one month. To finish them, bake the frozen baguettes directly on the oven racks in a 450°F oven until dark golden brown, about 10 minutes.

*Allison Ehri Kreidler is Fine Cooking's test kitchen associate and food stylist. ♦*



# Instead of Cream, Try Coconut Milk

BY LORI LONGBOTHAM



This convenient ingredient adds luxurious creaminess to soups, stews, and desserts

I fell in love with coconut milk in a Thai cooking class more than twenty years ago. Before that, I'd thought of anything coconut as very sweet, so it was a real revelation to try coconut milk, which was thick, rich, and creamy. That's when I realized that coconut went well beyond the shredded stuff in the blue bag on the supermarket shelf.

Versatile coconut milk, used instead of milk or cream, adds a wonderfully rich texture and flavor to everything from hearty soups to delicate desserts. Plus, it's the ultimate convenience food—popping open a can requires no work at all. Those cans will sit patiently on your pantry shelf waiting for you to make something fantastic; there's no need to worry about choosing a good coconut, opening it, or having it go bad.

**Seek out coconut milk from Thailand—it's consistently the best.** I find Thai coconut milk fresher tasting than others, with a luscious texture that's thick and rich. My favorite brands are Chaokoh and Aroy-D, which are available in 13.5-ounce and 14-ounce cans, respectively. (Some brands of coconut milk are also available in 5.6-ounce cans for when you need a smaller amount.)

Unless a recipe specifies otherwise, vigorously shake a can of coconut milk before opening it. Blending the very thick cream on the top with the thinner milk below will make it easier to remove the coconut milk from the can without a rubber spatula. Once the coconut milk is opened, transfer it to an airtight container and refrigerate. It won't last for more than a couple of days.

**Add coconut milk wherever you want creamy texture and rich flavor.** As you'll see in the recipes here (and in the ideas below), coconut milk is a wonderful addition to both savory and sweet dishes. For a perfect winter comfort food, try the satisfying vegetable soup at right, made with a lovely combination of hearty root vegetables, coconut milk, ginger, and fresh thyme. If most of your coconut milk experiences come from eating Thai or other Southeast Asian cuisine, my version of xim-xim, a Brazilian chicken and shrimp stew, will introduce you to an entirely different—and delicious—flavor profile. If it's dessert you're after, coconut milk joins bread for elegant individual bread puddings. And finally, for breakfast or a snack, try a warming bowl of oatmeal made with coconut milk and topped with candied pecans and coconut and dried peaches.

## Substitute coconut milk for a whole new flavor profile

- ❖ Make a quick Thai soup with coconut milk, store-bought Thai curry paste, and broth; add shrimp or chicken, red onion, cilantro, and canned straw mushrooms.
- ❖ Coconut milk is also good in creamy soups, like tomato, or hearty ones, like black bean.
- ❖ A splash of coconut milk adds quick flavor to stir-fries.
- ❖ After sautéing chicken, deglaze the pan with coconut milk, minced shallots, and ginger; add chopped mango chutney and let the mixture reduce. Garnish with minced scallions.
- ❖ Make creamed spinach or corn with coconut milk.
- ❖ When mashing white or sweet potatoes, add coconut milk instead of regular milk or cream.
- ❖ Add coconut milk to the liquid when you're making rice or risotto. It's also good in quick-cooking barley and couscous.
- ❖ Substitute coconut milk for the yogurt in your favorite Indian curry.
- ❖ Coconut milk is wonderful in smoothies, especially ones made with tropical fruits like mango and pineapple.
- ❖ Try a little coconut milk in fruit salads and fruit salsas. Make a mango and cucumber salsa with red onion, mint, basil, and coconut milk.
- ❖ Use coconut milk as the liquid in quick breads and muffins. They'll taste even better if you add toasted coconut, tropical fruits, or nuts.
- ❖ Use coconut milk with cream or half-and-half in custards like rice pudding or crème brûlée.
- ❖ For an easy dessert, heat coconut milk with sliced bananas, a little sugar, and a large pinch of salt and serve warm.





## Winter Vegetable Soup with Coconut Milk & Pear

*Yields about 8 cups; serves six to eight.*

Tossing pears into the mix of vegetables adds another layer of flavor and a wonderful texture.

**3 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1½ cups thinly sliced onion**  
**1 cup medium-diced carrot**  
**1 cup medium-diced parsnip**  
**1 cup medium-diced turnip**  
**1 cup medium-diced parsley root**  
(see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72)  
**or celery root**  
**½ cup finely chopped inner celery stalks with leaves**  
**1 cup thinly sliced Savoy cabbage**  
**1 Tbs. peeled, minced fresh ginger**  
**1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves; more leaves lightly chopped for garnish**  
**1 medium clove garlic, finely chopped**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**13½- or 14-oz. can coconut milk (do not shake)**  
**2 cups lower-salt chicken broth; more as needed**  
**3½ cups ½-inch-diced butternut squash (from a 2-lb. squash)**  
**2 medium firm-ripe Bosc pears, peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch pieces (1¼ cups)**

Melt the butter in a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven over medium heat. Stir in the onion, carrot, parsnip, turnip, parsley or celery root, and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 8 minutes. Stir in the cabbage, ginger, thyme, garlic,  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. salt, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage begins to soften, about 3 minutes.

Scoop  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of coconut cream from the top of the can and set it aside in a small bowl at room temperature. Add the remaining coconut milk, broth, and the squash and pears to the vegetables. Bring the mixture just to a boil over medium heat, stirring to scrape up any browned bits. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook at a bare simmer, stirring occasionally, until the squash is very soft, 20 minutes.

Purée with an immersion blender in the Dutch oven or in batches in a regular blender. Pour the soup through a large coarse strainer set over a large glass measure or bowl. If the soup is too thick, add more chicken broth until thinned to your liking. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

If necessary, reheat the soup in a clean pot. Ladle the soup into bowls, drizzle with the reserved coconut cream, and sprinkle with the lightly chopped thyme

## What's the difference between coconut water, coconut milk, coconut cream, and "lite" coconut milk?

At four months old, the young coconut (also called a jelly or green coconut) contains a delicate, clear, slightly sweet liquid called **coconut water**. **Coconut milk**, however, is white and thick and is made by blending grated mature coconut with hot water and then straining the liquid.

**Coconut cream** is the thick substance that floats to the top of the coconut milk and may be spooned off. Reduced-fat or "**lite**" **coconut milk** is just regular canned coconut milk with water added. I say who needs it? We can make that ourselves.

## Creamy Coconut Oatmeal with Dried Peaches & Candied Coconut Pecans

*Serves four.*

If you can't find dried peaches, try substituting other types of dried fruit. For more information on steel-cut oats, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 72.

**1 cup Irish steel-cut oatmeal**  
**3 Tbs. granulated sugar**  
**1½ tsp. light corn syrup**  
**Kosher salt**  
**½ cup coarsely chopped pecan halves**  
**¼ cup unsweetened dried shredded coconut**  
**½ cup finely diced dried peaches**  
**13½- or 14-oz. can coconut milk**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Spread the oatmeal on a large baking sheet, pick through it for husks and pebbles, and toast in the oven until light golden brown and fragrant, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl to cool.

Line a baking sheet with parchment or a nonstick baking liner. In a small saucepan over low heat, combine 2 Tbs. of the sugar and the corn syrup, ½ tsp.

water, and a pinch of salt. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the sugar is mostly melted (it won't dissolve completely), about 2 minutes. Off the heat, stir in the pecans and coconut. Spread the mixture in a thin layer on the prepared baking sheet and bake, stirring halfway through baking, until the coconut is dark brown, 16 to 18 minutes total. Transfer the pan to a wire rack to cool. Once cool, crumble the pecan mixture into a bowl and stir in the peaches.

While the coconut pecans bake, pour the coconut milk into a large liquid measuring cup and add enough water to make 4 cups. Transfer to a 4-quart saucepan, add the remaining 1 Tbs. sugar and a big pinch of salt, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, whisking occasionally. Add the oatmeal and cook, whisking occasionally, until the mixture begins to thicken, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the oatmeal is tender and thick, 25 to 30 minutes. Whisk occasionally at first and then switch to a wooden spoon and stir more frequently toward the end.

Serve the oatmeal in wide, shallow bowls, topped with the pecan mixture.

### make ahead

To cut down on cooking time, you can soak the oatmeal overnight: Measure the coconut milk and water as instructed and then add the toasted oatmeal, 1 Tbs. sugar, and a big pinch of salt. Cover and refrigerate overnight. When you're ready to cook, transfer everything to the saucepan, boil until the mixture begins to thicken, and then reduce to a simmer and cook until the oatmeal is tender and thick, 10 to 15 minutes total. Also, you can candy the pecans and coconut ahead of time, store in an airtight container, and stir in the peaches just before serving.



## Individual Toasted Coconut & Lemongrass Bread Puddings

*Serves eight.*

Several textures play well together here: The rich custard and soft bread are perfect foils for the crisp, toasty coconut.

**1 cup unsweetened dried shredded coconut**  
**6 cups ½-inch-cubed white sandwich bread, preferably Pepperidge Farm Hearty White (about 8 slices)**  
**2 cups half-and-half**  
**13½- or 14-oz. can coconut milk**  
**3 stalks fresh lemongrass, trimmed of root ends and tops, leaving 4-inch-long sections, thinly sliced crosswise**  
**Kosher salt**  
**6 large eggs**  
**⅓ cup granulated sugar**  
**1 Tbs. softened unsalted butter for the ramekins**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Spread the coconut in a thin layer on a large rimmed baking sheet and toast in the oven, stirring twice, until dark brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool. Put the bread cubes on the same baking sheet, spread in a single layer, and bake, stirring halfway through, until a pale golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes total. Let the bread cool on the baking sheet. (Turn the oven off.)





Meanwhile, in a 2- or 3-quart saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the half-and-half, coconut milk,  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of the toasted coconut, the lemongrass, and a pinch of salt to a simmer. Remove from the heat, cover, and let stand for 45 minutes. Pour through a coarse strainer set over a medium glass measuring cup or bowl, pressing hard on the solids to extract as much of the liquid as possible.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs and sugar. Slowly pour in the warm half-and-half mixture, whisking constantly. Toss in the bread and push it down with a spoon to submerge it. Let stand for 30 minutes, or until the bread is softened. Butter eight 8-fl.-oz. ramekins. Divide the bread mixture evenly among the buttered ramekins and pour any remaining custard over the top of each.

Heat the oven to 325°F. Have ready a roasting pan or baking dish large enough to accommodate the ramekins. Put on a kettle of water to boil for the water bath.

Set the ramekins in the roasting pan and put it in the oven. Carefully pour enough boiling water into the pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake until the custard is set, 30 to 35 minutes. (To check, cut into a pudding with a paring knife and peek into the center—the custard shouldn't be runny.) Carefully remove the ramekins from the pan and let them cool slightly on a wire rack.

Sprinkle the puddings with the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup toasted coconut and serve.



## Brazilian Chicken & Shrimp Stew

*Serves four.*

This is my take on xim-xim, a traditional stew from Brazil by way of West Africa. Xim-xim relies on a specific set of ingredients: dendê oil (the Brazilian name for palm oil), coconut milk, and nuts. You can substitute olive oil for the dendê oil.

**3 cloves garlic**

**Kosher salt**

**1 large white or yellow onion, coarsely chopped (3 cups)**

**2 large ripe plum tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and coarsely chopped (1 cup)**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro stems and leaves plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup whole leaves for garnish**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh lime juice**

**4 fresh Thai bird chiles, coarsely chopped, or jarred malagueta peppers, drained (See From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72)**

**1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**4 bone-in, skinless chicken thighs (1½ lb.)**

**1 lb. jumbo shrimp (21 to 25 per lb.), shelled and deveined**

**2 Tbs. plus  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup lightly salted cashews, toasted**

**3 Tbs. olive oil or well-shaken dendê and soy oil blend (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72)**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup well-stirred canned coconut milk**  
**Hot cooked white rice for serving**

Peel and chop the garlic. Sprinkle with 1 tsp. salt, and with the side of a heavy chef's knife, mash to a paste. Transfer to a food processor and add the onion, tomatoes, chopped cilantro stems and leaves, lime juice, chiles, ginger, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. black pepper. Pulse until finely chopped and almost smooth. Put the chicken and shrimp in a large bowl, add

the onion mixture, and turn to coat well. Cover and refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours.

Meanwhile, pulse 2 Tbs. of the cashews in a spice grinder just until finely ground; do not let them form a paste.

Remove the chicken from the marinade, brushing excess marinade back into the bowl. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels. Season on both sides with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt. Heat 2 Tbs. of the olive or dendê oil in a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the chicken and cook, turning once, until very lightly browned on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer the thighs to a plate as they are browned.

Remove the shrimp from the marinade and set them aside. Put the marinade in the Dutch oven, add the coconut milk and ground cashews, and cook over medium heat, stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan, for 3 minutes to cook off the raw onion flavor.

Return the chicken to the Dutch oven, reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally and turning the chicken halfway through cooking, until the chicken is tender and cooked through, about 25 minutes total.

Increase the heat to medium, stir in the shrimp, and cook, stirring constantly, just until the shrimp are bright pink and nearly opaque throughout, 2 to 3 minutes; they will continue to cook after they're removed from the heat. Off the heat, stir in half the remaining cashews and half the whole cilantro leaves. Season to taste with salt.

Transfer the chicken to a large deep platter and pour the shrimp and sauce over it. Drizzle with the remaining 1 Tbs. dendê or olive oil, top with the remaining cashews and cilantro leaves, and serve hot with the white rice.

*Lori Longbotham is the author of several cookbooks; her latest, Luscious Creamy Desserts, will be published in April. ♦*

Comforting  
hot chocolate



Decadent truffles



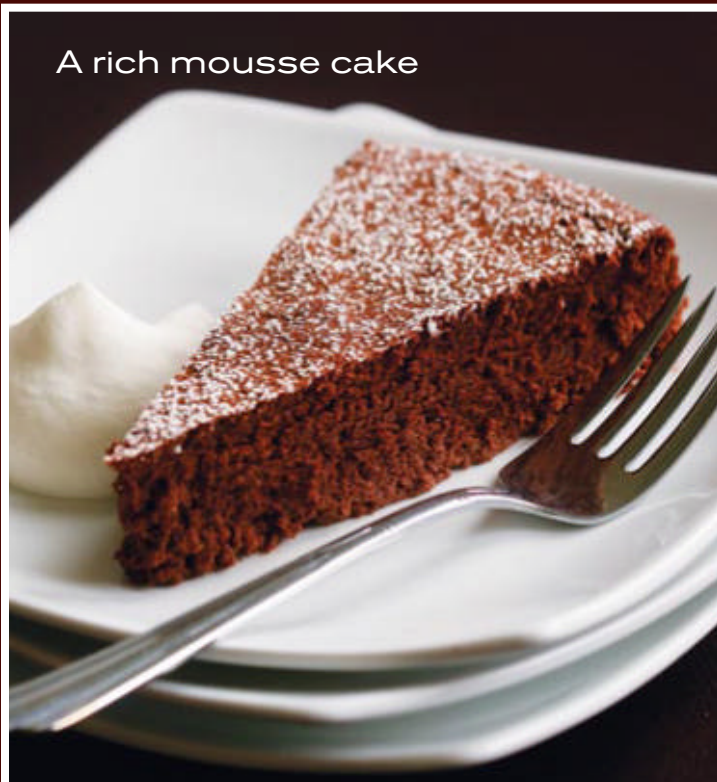
# Luscious Desserts from Chocolate

Learn to make this delicious  
blend of chocolate and  
cream and use it to create  
four sweet treats

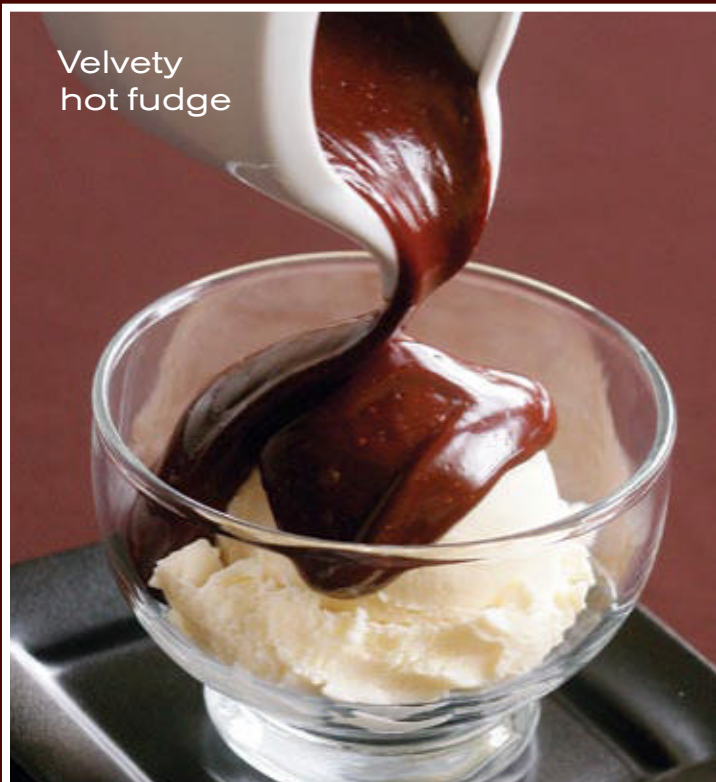




A rich mousse cake



Velvety  
hot fudge



# Ganache

BY GREG CASE & KERI FISHER

In baking, one good recipe can work very hard for you. Take cake, for instance. You don't need to learn a new cake recipe for every dessert you want to make; sometimes you need to learn only one. Ganache is another such recipe workhorse. A classic French combination of melted chocolate and heavy cream, ganache is simple to make and can be used in many ways: to make icings and glazes for cakes or as an ingredient in anything from fudge sauce to truffles and tortes.

**With one ganache recipe, you can create a surprising variety of chocolate desserts.** Whisk in some milk and a pinch of salt and you've got rich, thick hot chocolate—far richer than traditional cocoa-based hot

chocolates. Add some butter and corn syrup and you have a gooey, stick-to-your-spoon hot fudge sauce that will please both kids and grown-ups. Add eggs and flour for a delicious mousse-like chocolate torte that's light and moist. Or chill, roll, coat, and dust with cocoa and you've got incredible homemade truffles that are guaranteed to impress your loved ones (Valentine's Day, anyone?). And to make truffles even more interesting, you can flavor your ganache with liqueurs like amaretto or Kahlúa, or with mint extract or espresso. With all these possibilities, it's no wonder ganache is a staple in every pastry chef's kitchen—and we hope it'll be a part of yours, too.

**Our ganache method is a breeze.** Though it may sound complex, ganache is actually very easy to make. And we make it even eas-

ier by using a food processor. Simply grind chopped semisweet chocolate in the processor, add hot heavy cream, and process until smooth. That's it. You don't have to temper the chocolate—which involves bringing it to specific temperatures to stabilize it and give it a uniform sheen—or even use a thermometer. The only cooking you have to do is boiling the cream. It's that easy. But there is one small thing you need to be careful of: Make sure you don't overwork the ganache after you add the cream. You want to run the processor just until the mixture is smooth; otherwise, the cream will whip and the ganache will become too thick.

Find a recipe for Vanilla  
Layer Cake with  
Rum-Ganache Icing at  
[finecooking.com](http://finecooking.com)

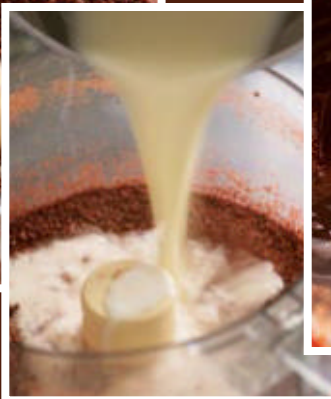
## Basic Ganache

*Yields about 2 cups.*

**12 oz. semisweet chocolate (55% to 60% cacao; see below right), coarsely chopped or broken into pieces (2 slightly heaping cups)**  
**1 cup heavy cream**

Grind the chocolate in a food processor until it reaches the consistency of coarse meal, about 30 seconds. Bring the cream to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the cream to the food processor and process until smooth, about 10 seconds.

If not using right away, transfer the ganache to a bowl, cover, and refrigerate. To reheat, warm it gently in a double boiler or in the microwave.



## Hot Chocolate

*Yields about 8½ cups;  
serves eight.*

We like to whip up a batch of ganache and keep it in the fridge to make hot chocolate on the fly. But be warned: This is not your Swiss Miss hot cocoa; this version is much richer, not nearly as sweet, and quite a bit thicker. To make 1 cup at a time, heat 1 cup milk and add ⅓ cup ganache and just a touch of salt.

**6 cups whole milk; more as needed**

**1 recipe Basic Ganache (above)**  
**Pinch kosher salt**

In a medium saucepan, heat the milk over medium heat until simmering. Add the ganache and salt and stir until smooth (the ganache can be either warm or cold). If you prefer a thinner consistency, add more milk. Serve hot in mugs.

## Choosing chocolate for ganache

People say that for cooking, you should use only a wine you would drink. We think the same holds true for chocolate: Use only a chocolate you would eat straight from the package. Since chocolate is one of only two ingredients in ganache, the flavor of the ganache will depend largely on the flavor of the chocolate.

**Our ganache is made with semisweet chocolate**, which is loosely defined by the Food and Drug Administration as having at least 35% total cacao bean content. Most semisweet chocolates, however, have anywhere from 55% to 70% cacao, and some go even higher. But higher cacao content doesn't necessarily mean better chocolate. The best way to learn what type of chocolate you prefer is to try several kinds. Expensive, high-percentage brands tend to be bitter and complex, traits that are appealing to some people. Chocolates with lower cacao content tend to be sweeter. So if you like the taste of milk chocolate, you might like these chocolates better. We prefer a chocolate that's between 55% and 60% because it's rich and moderately sweet without a strong bitter edge, and it produces consistent results when making ganache. Ganache made with higher-percentage chocolate may be less stable and prone to seizing.

**Don't cut corners by using chocolate chips.** They usually contain added ingredients that help them hold their shape when baked but can translate into an overly thick, viscous ganache.



# Chocolate-Espresso Mousse Torte

*Serves twelve.*

Be sure to wrap your springform pan with heavy-duty aluminum foil (or two layers of regular foil); even the best pans can let water in. This torte is delicious alone or with lightly sweetened whipped cream.

**1 Tbs. softened unsalted butter for the pan**

**1 recipe Basic Ganache (at left)**

**1 Tbs. instant espresso granules**

**6 large eggs, at room temperature**

**½ cup granulated sugar**

**1½ oz. (¼ cup) all-purpose flour**

**1 Tbs. confectioners' sugar**

**¼ tsp. ground cinnamon**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Generously butter a 10-inch springform pan and wrap the bottom and sides in heavy-duty aluminum foil. Have ready a roasting pan just big enough to accommodate the springform, and put a kettle of water on to boil.

Make the ganache. Dissolve the espresso powder in 1 Tbs. hot water and add it to the warm ganache still in the food processor. Process until fully incorporated, about 10 seconds. Transfer the espresso-flavored ganache to a large bowl.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip the eggs, sugar, and flour at just under high speed until pale, light, and fluffy and at least

doubled in volume (if not tripled), about 6 minutes. Add about one-third of the egg mixture to the ganache and mix with a rubber spatula until combined. Add the remaining egg mixture and gently fold together until just combined and no obvious streaks of egg remain.

Pour the batter into the prepared springform pan. Set the pan inside the roasting pan and fill the roasting pan with 1 to 1½ inches of boiling water. Bake until a dry crust forms on the top of the torte and the edges seem set but the center is still a bit wobbly when you jiggle it, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the torte from the water bath and its foil wrap. Cool the torte on a wire rack to room temperature and then refrigerate until

cold and completely set, at least 3 hours or overnight.

To unmold, carefully remove the springform ring. Put a piece of plastic wrap over the top of the torte. Invert the torte onto a baking sheet and remove the pan bottom; use a thin-bladed knife to help separate the torte and pan bottom if necessary. Invert the torte again onto a serving plate and remove the plastic wrap. Just before serving, put the confectioners' sugar and cinnamon in a small fine strainer and sift over the top of the torte.

To cut the torte as cleanly as possible, dip your knife in hot water to heat the blade and wipe dry before each cut. Or for a cleaner cut, use unwaxed dental floss.







## Hot Fudge Sauce

*Yields about 2 cups.*

We like to serve this fudge sauce over vanilla or coffee ice cream.

**1 recipe Basic Ganache (p. 68)**  
**2 Tbs. light corn syrup**  
**2 tsp. pure vanilla extract**  
**1 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened**

Make the ganache and add the corn syrup, vanilla, and butter to the warm ganache still in the food processor. Process until smooth, about 10 seconds. Serve immediately over ice cream, or transfer to a container, cool, cover, and refrigerate for up to 1 week. To reheat, pour into a small saucepan and warm over medium-low heat.

## Truffles

*Yields about 45 truffles.*

When coating the truffles, it's important to work quickly and in batches so the coating doesn't harden before you roll them in the cocoa powder. Any leftover cocoa powder can be sifted and saved. We prefer to use Dutch-processed cocoa powder to coat the truffles because it's brighter in color and less acidic than natural cocoa powder. But if you can find only natural cocoa, you can use it instead.

**1 recipe Basic Ganache (p. 68)**  
**2 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened**  
**1 cup cocoa powder (preferably Dutch-processed); more as needed**  
**8 oz. semisweet chocolate, chopped (about 1½ cups)**

Make the ganache and add the butter to the warm ganache still in the food processor. Process until smooth, about 10 seconds. Transfer to a medium bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours or overnight.

Put the cocoa powder in a large bowl. **1** Using 2 teaspoons, drop rounded, heaping

teaspoonfuls of truffle mixture onto a large, parchment-lined baking sheet. **2** When all of the truffles are scooped, dip them in the cocoa and use your palms to roll the truffles into smooth 1-inch balls (don't worry about making them perfect; slightly irregular truffles have an appealing homemade appearance). Transfer the truffles to the refrigerator.

Melt the chocolate in a medium heatproof bowl set in a small skillet of barely simmering water, stirring occasionally until smooth.

Transfer the bowl to a work surface. **3** Working in batches, use your fingers or a couple of forks to coat the truffles with the melted chocolate, **4** coat them again with cocoa or nuts (see the sidebar at right), and return them to the baking sheet. If using your hands, you'll have to stop and wash off the chocolate in between batches.

Let the truffles sit at room temperature for at least 15 minutes before serving. If not serving right away, store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator, where they will keep for up to 5 days. Bring them to room temperature before serving.

## A shortcut to easy truffles

If you follow the steps at right, you'll see that making truffles is not as difficult as you might think, though we admit it can get a bit messy. And we came up with a shortcut that makes it even easier. While pastry chefs typically temper the melted chocolate they use to coat truffles so that they look smooth and shiny, we skip the tempering (which can be tricky) and roll the truffles in cocoa powder or ground nuts right after coating them with melted chocolate. The truffles look great and any imperfections in the chocolate coating are hidden.





## Truffle Shuffle

Once you learn how to make truffles, the flavor possibilities are endless.

### LIQUEUR FILLING

Add 3 Tbs. of a flavored liqueur of your choice to the ganache before refrigerating. We like Frangelico, Bailey's, Godiva, Kahlúa, and amaretto.

### NUT COATING

After coating the truffles with melted chocolate, coat them with 1 cup (6 oz.) of your choice of finely chopped toasted nuts instead of cocoa powder. We like almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans, peanuts, and pistachios. Note that when you use nuts instead of cocoa for the coating, you will still need cocoa to shape the truffles.

### MEXICAN CHOCOLATE

Add 2 Tbs. Kahlúa liqueur, 2 tsp. instant espresso, and ½ tsp. ground cinnamon to the ganache. Coat the truffles with 1 cup (6 oz.) ground toasted almonds.

### TOFFEE & FLEUR DE SEL

Add ½ cup ground toffee bits (I use Heath Bars and grind them coarsely in a food processor) and ¼ tsp. fleur de sel to the ganache. Use 1 ¼ cups finely ground toffee bits mixed with 1 tsp. fleur de sel for the coating. (You'll need a total of six 1.4-oz. Heath Bars.)

### PB&J

Add ⅔ cup strawberry jam to the ganache and process until smooth. Coat the truffles with 2 cups (10 oz.) ground salted peanuts. (Yields about 54 truffles because of the added jam.)

### MINT

Add ½ tsp. pure peppermint extract to the ganache.



1



2



3

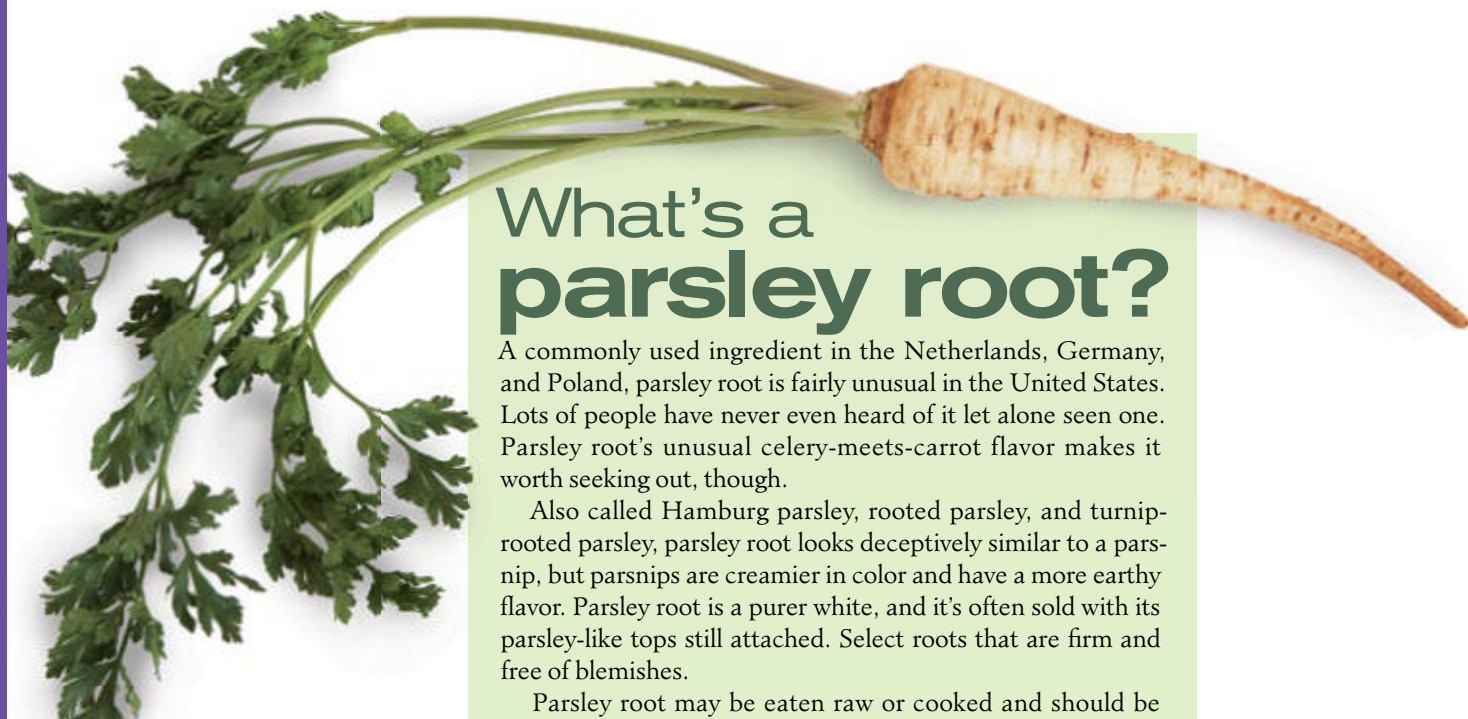


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Greg Case is a professional baker, and Keri Fisher is a food writer. They are the authors of the book *One Cake, One Hundred Desserts*. ♦

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BY DABNEY GOUGH



## What's a parsley root?

A commonly used ingredient in the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland, parsley root is fairly unusual in the United States. Lots of people have never even heard of it let alone seen one. Parsley root's unusual celery-meets-carrot flavor makes it worth seeking out, though.

Also called Hamburg parsley, rooted parsley, and turnip-rooted parsley, parsley root looks deceptively similar to a parsnip, but parsnips are creamier in color and have a more earthy flavor. Parsley root is a purer white, and it's often sold with its parsley-like tops still attached. Select roots that are firm and free of blemishes.

Parsley root may be eaten raw or cooked and should be peeled before using. It's good in salads, roasts, stews, and soups, like the Winter Vegetable Soup on p. 63. You can also use parsley root's leaves just as you would ordinary parsley, although they're tougher and may not be as flavorful as the variety grown specifically for its leaves.

To store, remove the tops if they're still attached and keep them separate if you plan to use them. Wrap the roots in a paper towel and put them in a plastic bag. They should keep in your fridge's crisper drawer for up to a week.

## Feeling your oats, the Irish way



If you've never tasted Irish oats, this issue's Creamy Coconut Oatmeal recipe (p. 64) is a delicious way to give them a try. Also known as steel-cut oats, Irish oats are made from whole oat groats that are cut with steel blades into two or three pieces. They have a nutty flavor and a pleasantly chewy texture not found in rolled or instant oats.

Because of their density, Irish oats require about 30 minutes of simmering and frequent stirring. (Rolled oats cook more quickly because they have already been steamed and rolled to a thinner

form.) Our Creamy Coconut Oatmeal recipe features a couple of tricks that build on the standard simmering method. First, toasting the oats in the oven enhances their natural nuttiness. You also have the option of soaking the oats in their cooking liquid overnight. Soaking cuts their stovetop cooking time by half and allows you a few extra Z's before you indulge in this comforting breakfast.

To store Irish oats, seal in an airtight container and keep in a cool, dry place for up to six months or freeze for up to one year.



## trick of the trade

# Garnish like a pro

You've probably seen this garnishing trick before, perhaps atop a marbled cheesecake or in a swirled dessert sauce at a restaurant. In this issue, we used it to dress up the Winter Vegetable Soup on p. 63. It's a handy technique to know, and you'll look like a pro every time you use it.

The swirly marbled look is made by either layering two smooth, contrasting liquids or by putting them next to each other and then dragging a skewer through them. The marbled look on the Peppermint Brownies shown here begins with parallel lines of melted white chocolate on top of chocolate ganache (see [FineCooking.com](http://FineCooking.com) for the recipe). To garnish the soup, we used a squirt bottle to place a few drops of coconut milk on the soup and then dragged the skewer through the drops.

For variation, use one big dot of garnish, many small ones, or anything in between. And instead of the skewer, try a toothpick, chopstick, table knife, or fork to create different effects.



## A safer way to clean your blender

Cleaning a blender jar can be an annoying and tricky task. Taking it apart is easy, but then suddenly you have four pointy blades in your hand, and then there's the gasket, which is easy to lose. Fortunately, there's a better and safer way. Without taking the jar apart, fill it about one-third full with warm water and add a squirt of dishwashing soap. Put the lid on, return it to its base, and turn it on for a few seconds—it'll practically clean itself. Pour out the water, sponge off any residue from the jar and lid, and rinse.

# Authentic ingredients for Brazilian stew

The Brazilian Chicken & Shrimp Stew on p. 65 is my version of xim-xim, a dish from the Bahia region of Brazil. Though you can use easy-to-find and perfectly acceptable substitutions, a couple of ingredients characteristic of the food from this region—dendê oil and malagueta peppers—will give the stew a more authentic flavor. Neither of these ingredients is widely available in the United States, but they can be found in markets in areas with a large Brazilian population. They're also available by mail order (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 81)

—Lori Longbotham, contributor



## Dendê oil

Made from the kernel of the dendezeiro palm fruit, dendê oil is used both for cooking and for drizzling over finished food. It's a thick oil with a rich, nutty flavor and a gorgeous red-orange color that gives food an orange glow. Pure dendê oil is difficult to find—most is blended with soy oil, and that's fine for this stew. Store dendê oil in a dark space at cool room temperature and before using it, always smell to make sure it's not rancid. Due to its high saturated fat content, it's normal for it to be semi-solid at room temperature.



## Malagueta peppers

One of the most widely used chiles in Brazil, malagueta peppers are indispensable in preparing Bahian dishes.

They're also set on the table along with salt and black pepper as a condiment. The small red chiles are fiercely hot—in the range of 60,000 to 100,000 Scoville units.

That's about the same as Thai bird chiles, which may be substituted. Next to impossible to find fresh in the U.S., they're usually sold pickled in vinegar in small glass bottles.

# Stock vs. broth: What's the difference?

The art of stock and broth making is one of the first subjects you're taught in culinary school. Bones, you learn, are what make a stock a stock and not a broth. The bones, with little to no meat on them, lend gelatin to the stock, giving it "body." (For me, breaking huge halibut skeletons in half to fit them into the kettle was a memorable introduction to the visceral side of cooking.) Stock may or may not also contain aromatics, like vegetables or herbs.

Broth, on the other hand, is made from meat, vegetables, and aromatics. Though it's sometimes made with meat still on the bone (as in broth made from a whole chicken, like the one at right), broth's distinguishing flavor comes from the meat itself. Compared with stock, it has a lighter body and a more distinctly meaty (or vegetal) flavor.

Broth is more or less ready to eat, whereas stock typically needs some enhancement from additional ingredients or further cooking to turn it into something you'd want to eat. So if you're making a quick soup, broth is your best bet, but if it's a long-cooking soup, then either would work.

In a reduction sauce, stock may be the better option because it will produce a nice consistency without needing additional thickeners. Reduced broth becomes very flavorful, but it lacks the body of reduced stock, and if the broth was highly seasoned to begin with, reduction may make it overly salty. This is especially true of commercially produced broths, which tend to be much saltier than homemade versions.

## Our favorite store-bought broth

*Fine Cooking* recipes usually call for broth, not stock—few stores sell “soup bones” these days, so it's easier to find the ingredients for homemade broth. In a perfect world, we'd cook with homemade broth all the time, but some brands of store-bought broth are a solid alternative in our time-crunched society.

In recipes calling for chicken broth, we test with Swanson Natural Goodness, which has less sodium than Swanson's standard chicken broth. It was the top pick in our January 2003 Tasting Panel, and it retained its crown when we recently retasted chicken broths. We like it because it's all natural (no msg), and it's full-flavored, with a good balance of chicken, vegetable, and herb flavors.



## Chicken Broth

*Yields about 3 quarts.*

For the clearest broth, cook at the barest simmer and avoid stirring or agitating as much as possible.

- 5- to 6-lb. chicken**
- 1 lb. yellow onions (2 medium), peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces**
- ½ lb. carrots (3 medium), peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces**
- ¼ lb. celery (2 medium ribs), cut into 2-inch pieces**
- 10 black peppercorns**
- 3 large sprigs flat-leaf parsley**
- 2 large sprigs thyme**
- 1 bay leaf**
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**

If the giblets were included with the chicken, discard the liver and put the rest in a deep, narrow 8-quart stock pot. Remove the breast meat from the chicken and save for another use. Pull off and discard any large pieces of fat from the cavity opening.

Rinse the chicken, especially its cavity, and put it in the pot. Add 3 quarts cold water, plus more if necessary to cover the chicken. Bring to a simmer over

medium-high heat and then reduce the heat to maintain a bare simmer. Cook for 30 minutes, skimming off any scum with a slotted spoon or skimmer.

Add the remaining ingredients, cover, and continue to cook at a bare simmer for 2 hours, adjusting the heat and skimming as necessary.

With tongs and a large slotted spoon or skimmer, remove most of the solids, transferring them to a bowl to cool before discarding. Slowly strain the broth through a fine sieve set over another large pot. If there are cloudy dregs as you near the bottom, stop straining and discard them.

Taste the broth; if you'd prefer its flavor to be more concentrated, simmer it until it's as flavorful as you like. Depending on how you'll be using the broth, you may want to season it with more salt at this point. If the broth is very fatty, chill it and then remove the solidified fat with a slotted spoon. Refrigerate for up to 5 days, or freeze for longer storage.

—Jennifer Armentrout,  
senior food editor



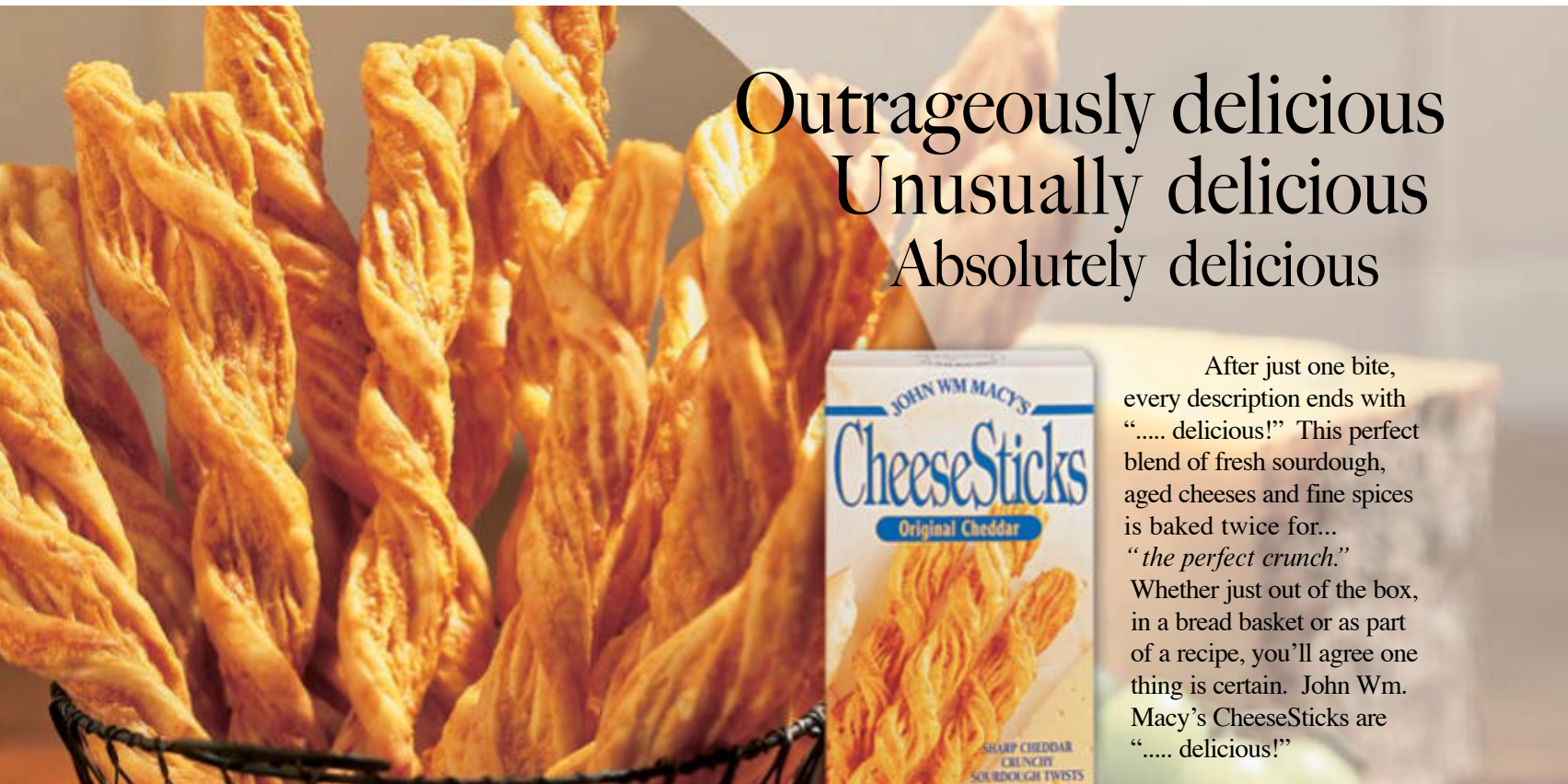
# How to peel pearl onions

It's almost as if pearl onions don't want to be peeled. Their tiny size and tightly wrapped skin makes handling them awkward. And if you sacrifice the more easily peeled first fleshy layer, it doesn't leave you with much onion.

The easiest way to peel just the pearl onion's outer skin is by blanching in boiling water. To do this, bring a small saucepan of water to a boil and fill a medium bowl with ice water. Trim both ends of each onion and put them in the boiling water for about 30 seconds. Then transfer the onions to the ice water to stop the cooking. Once they're cool, use a paring knife to slip off the skins.



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Unusually delicious  
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# All about breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs are an amazingly versatile ingredient. They can thicken, add bulk, and bind (as in this issue's meatloaf recipes on pp. 36–39) or they can serve as a crunchy coating or topping (as in the Fried Meatloaf recipe at right). Breadcrumb varieties aren't necessarily interchangeable, though. Here's the lowdown on the major categories and typical uses for each.

## Panko

### (Japanese breadcrumbs)

In Japanese, the word “panko” simply means breadcrumbs. In the U.S., though, panko refers to a particular type of Japanese breadcrumb. Panko breadcrumbs are dry. They have a shard-like shape and a uniformly light color (most panko is made from crust-free bread). Their unique texture is particularly well suited for breading and frying. Panko used to be hard to find anywhere other than an Asian market, but recently we've noticed it cropping up in large supermarkets—look for it in the Asian section, the dry breadcrumb section, or near the fish counter.

## Fresh breadcrumbs

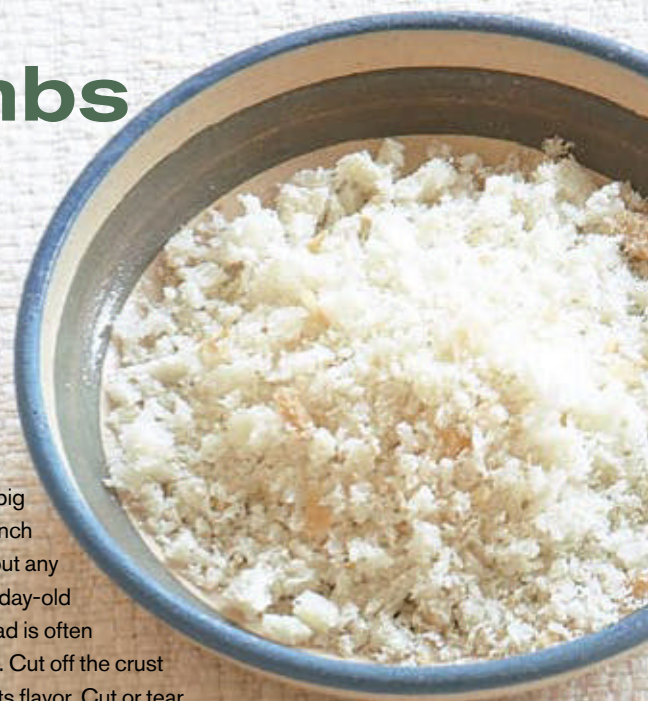
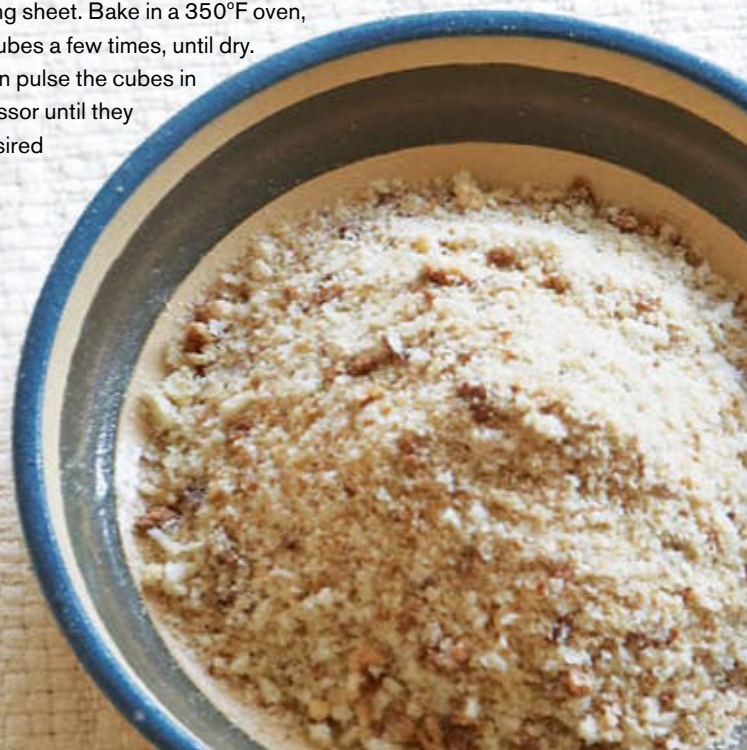
Fresh breadcrumbs make an excellent binder, which is why they so often show up in meatloaf and stuffing recipes. They're also our second choice, after panko, for breading and frying. Making your own fresh breadcrumbs is easy, and you can make a big batch so they're always on hand. French or Italian loaves are best, but just about any type of bread will work. One- or two-day-old bread works best, as really fresh bread is often too moist to break down into crumbs. Cut off the crust if you like—we usually leave it on for its flavor. Cut or tear the bread into large pieces, and pulse in a food processor until the crumbs reach the desired consistency.

## Dry breadcrumbs

Dry breadcrumbs are typically used as a topping to add a crunchy textural dimension to gratins, casseroles, and other similar dishes. You can find commercially made dry breadcrumbs in most supermarkets, but we recommend making your own so you have more control over the flavor and texture of the crumbs. To make them, cut the bread (with or without the crust) into small cubes and spread the cubes in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake in a 350°F oven, turning the cubes a few times, until dry. Cool and then pulse the cubes in a food processor until they reach the desired consistency.

### How to store

Seal breadcrumbs in a zip-top plastic bag and freeze for up to six months. There's no need to thaw frozen breadcrumbs before using.





# leftovers

## Make yesterday's meatloaf even better

Fried meatloaf (yes, you read that right) might just be my favorite leftovers dish. You take a few slices of cold meatloaf, coat them in breading, and fry them until crisp and golden-brown on the outside and moist and steaming-hot on the inside. Gourmet cooking it's not, but boy, is it delicious.



### Fried Meatloaf

*Serves four.*

You can make this with the leftovers from any of the loaves on pp. 36–39, but it's especially good made with the bacon-wrapped meatloaf because of the mushroom gravy that comes with it.

**½ cup all-purpose flour**

**1 large egg**

**1 cup panko or fresh breadcrumbs**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**Four ½- to ¾-inch-thick slices cold leftover meatloaf**

**1 to 1½ cups canola or peanut oil for frying**

Set three wide, shallow dishes (such as pie plates) in a row on the counter. Put the flour in the first dish. Crack the egg into the second dish and beat it lightly with a fork. Put the panko or crumbs in the third dish and toss them with ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper.

Working with one slice at a time, dredge the meatloaf first in the flour and then in the egg, coating it on all sides and shaking gently after each dip to knock off the excess. Lay the meatloaf

in the crumbs, scatter some crumbs on top of the slice, and press gently to adhere. Flip and repeat once or twice with the crumbs to coat really well; be sure to get the edges as well. As you finish each slice, set it on a tray. When all are coated, refrigerate for at least 5 minutes and up to ½ hour to let the breading set up. Save some of the leftover crumbs for testing the frying oil temperature and discard the remaining breading ingredients.

When ready to cook, pour about ⅓ inch of oil into a heavy-duty 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan. Have ready a paper-towel-lined tray or plate. Heat the oil over medium-high heat until it immediately and vigorously bubbles when you gently flick a few leftover crumbs into it.

With a slotted metal spatula, carefully slip the breaded meatloaf into the oil. Fry until golden brown on both sides, about 1 minute per side, using the spatula to carefully turn the slices. Transfer to the paper towels, sprinkle lightly with salt, and let sit briefly to drain excess oil. Serve hot.

—Jennifer Armentrout,  
senior food editor

## Acidic foods need nonreactive pans

If you've ever made tomato sauce in an aluminum pan, you've probably discovered why nonreactive materials are important when cooking acidic ingredients. Aluminum and copper are favored in the kitchen as good conductors of heat, but the presence of acids causes a chemical reaction that gives the food off-colors and metallic flavors. We've even seen aluminum foil dissolve partially when used to cover a tomatoey lasagne. For this reason, the tomato soup recipes on pp. 54–57 and on our back cover call for a nonreactive saucepan.

Cookware manufacturers have come up with several ways to take advantage of aluminum and copper's excellent conductivity while overcoming their reactive qualities. Lining reactive pans with a nonreactive interior surface (like stainless steel, enamel, or tin) is one such strategy. Another approach is to give a stainless-steel pan an exterior base or enclosed core of copper or aluminum. Aluminum can also be made nonreactive through an electrochemical process called anodization. Anodized aluminum pans are usually very dark gray or black.

While cast iron itself is reactive, a good seasoning is often enough of a barrier to prevent the chemical interaction. Ceramic and Pyrex bakeware are also nonreactive. ♦





## Shopping for White Chocolate

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

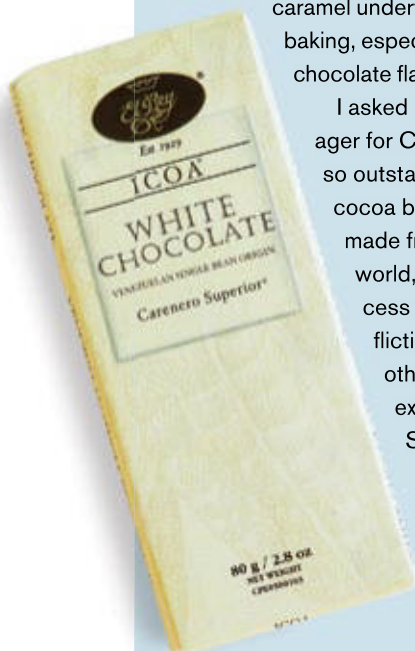
White chocolate isn't really chocolate at all because it contains no cocoa solids or chocolate liquor. It's made with cocoa butter (the fat from cocoa beans), sugar, and milk and usually contains natural vanilla or vanillin, an artificial flavoring. More commonly used in desserts than eaten plain, white chocolate has a quick, even melt and creamy texture that make it ideal for mousses, cheesecakes, truffles, and cookies.

To find out which brands to buy, we gathered *Fine Cooking* staffers for a blind tasting of several widely available white chocolates.

### Not your ordinary white

If you like to snack on white chocolate (or any chocolate, really), this one's for you. **El Rey Icoa** white chocolate has a rich, nuanced flavor reminiscent of sweet milk chocolate with nutty, caramel undertones. It's almost too distinctive for baking, especially if you're expecting a classic white-chocolate flavor, but perfect for a sweet nibble.

I asked Leah Shields, international sales manager for Chocolates El Rey, why their product is so outstanding. She explained that because the cocoa butter used for most white chocolates is made from beans that come from all over the world, it goes through a "deodorization" process that removes any strong, possibly conflicting flavors. El Rey's cocoa butter, on the other hand, is not deodorized because it's extracted from single-origin Carnero Superior beans grown in one small region of Venezuela, so it maintains all its complex natural flavors. El Rey Icoa white chocolate is available in baking supply and specialty food stores for about \$3.99 for a 2.8-ounce bar.



We were looking for smooth, silky texture and rich milk and vanilla flavor not overwhelmed by sweetness. Our favorite was **Callebaut** (\$6.99 per pound), without a doubt. It best delivered the subtle flavor we were after, with a nearly perfect balance of milk, sugar, and vanilla. Its buttery flavor managed to be both rich and delicate, and we loved its creamy, melt-in-your-mouth texture. Even white-chocolate skeptics would find this one good enough to eat plain. Callebaut is available in specialty food stores and in some supermarkets. It's usually sold in chunks cut from a large block and individually wrapped by the store.

If your local store doesn't carry Callebaut, look for **Lindt** (\$2.59 for 3.3 ounces) or **Ghirardelli** (\$2.79 for 4 ounces), which were our second favorites. We liked Lindt's smooth melt and pleasant balance of milky sweetness and mellow vanilla flavor, but we didn't love the hint of artificial vanilla on the finish. Ghirardelli also had a nice mouthfeel with a quick melt and a pleasantly creamy, rich flavor, although some found it a tad too sweet. ♦



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# Salt makes everything taste better

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

Professional chefs are different from the rest of us, but the way they use salt really sets them apart. It's worthwhile to follow their lead, because salt is just about the closest thing we have to a magic ingredient. Let's take a closer look at three key ways that salt works wonders:

## 1. Salt tastes good—and makes everything else taste good

Why does salt taste good to us? According to the experts at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia, it boils down to biology. We like the taste because our bodies need sodium chloride.

And sprinkling a bit of sodium chloride onto other foods ensures that we'll consume lots of other essential nutrients, too, because salt makes pretty much everything else taste better. Thanks to its chemical nature, salt has the amazing ability to intensify agreeable tastes and diminish disagreeable ones. What more could a cook ask for?

Perhaps you've heard the old saw about salt bringing out the flavor of a dish. Well, the scientists at the Monell Center say it's absolutely true. The reason: Some flavor compounds are too subtle to detect, but when you add even just a teeny amount of salt, neurological magic happens: Suddenly, our taste receptors can detect flavors they weren't able to sense before.

So, when you add salt to roasted squash, the squash doesn't merely become salty; rather, the myriad complex flavors of the vegetable come to the fore. Add a bit of salt to bread dough, and likewise, the bread doesn't necessarily taste salty; it just tastes the way bread should.

And the salt in recipes for cakes, cookies, tarts, puddings, and other sweets isn't there to make these treats salty; it's there to ensure that they taste good.

### When's the best time to salt?

For the best-tasting soups, braises, and other slow-cooked dishes, add salt gradually throughout the cooking. That gives the salt time to disperse and interact with the molecules in the food. Sprinkling salt onto food just before you eat it does give you a big, up-front flavor bang, but not necessarily the deep, subtle seasoning you'd get from adding the salt while cooking.

## 2. Salt enhances sweetness and blocks bitterness

In addition to being a general flavor amplifier, salt has a special ability to enhance sweetness in foods. Taste two chocolate puddings that are the same in every way except that one contains a bit of salt and the other none: The one with salt will taste sweeter. That's because sodium ions zero in on bitter flavor compounds and suppress them, making the sweet flavors seem stronger.

For the same reason, salt makes bitter foods more palatable. So it's always a good idea to pair bitter foods or drinks

with something salty, be it curls of Parmigiano-Reggiano atop grilled radicchio or a well-seasoned steak when you're drinking a big, tannic Cabernet (the salt from the steak actually improves the flavor of the wine because it tones down the bitter tannins). And if you ever find that some of your roast's pan drippings have become too deeply browned (though not burned), don't despair. If you season it well you can still make a delicious pan sauce, because the salt will balance much of the bitterness.

## 3. Salt can make meat juicier

I'm no culinary genius, but my friends think I am. Why? Because my roast chicken is always juicy. My secret? Salt.

Before I roast a chicken, I treat the bird to a leisurely soak in salty water (a.k.a. brine). Of course, brining is no secret these days; in fact, it's all the rage, because it really works.

Meats that tend to dry out during cooking—e.g., chicken, turkey, pork, shrimp—stay juicy and delicious if you brine them first. When you soak meat in brine, the salt water flows in, and the salt goes to work on the protein cells, altering them by loosening and unwinding the strands of protein and allowing them to sop up the brine. If you weigh your meat before and after brining, it will weigh

more afterward, thanks to the liquid it has absorbed.

Of course, all this extra moisture would be useless if it were lost during cooking. But therein lies the magic of brining: The moisture isn't lost during cooking. Well, some is—that's inevitable because heat causes proteins to shrink and squeeze out liquid—but much less than if the meat hadn't been brined. The result is moister meat that's more flavorful, too, because the saltwater that the meat soaked up tastes good. For even better flavor, savvy chefs add other flavorings to their brine, like sugar, herbs, and spices; meat will drink in those flavors, too.

*Kimberly Y. Masibay is an editor at large for Fine Cooking.* ♦





### Front Cover

We divided Jennifer Armentrout's macaroni and cheese (p. 48) into individual portions for the cover shot. BIA Cordon Bleu's 16-ounce square wavy bakers, shown in color espresso, are available at Chef's Warehouse (650-553-4155) for \$10 each.

### Chocolate Ganache, p. 66

Greg Case and Keri Fisher call for semi-sweet chocolate to make their decadent ganache. Chocosphere.com (877-992-4626) has several varieties of high-quality semisweet chocolate to choose from; just make sure you don't buy one that has more than 60% cocoa in it.

Fleur de sel (for one of the truffle variations) is available in specialty shops, or look for it at Earthy.com (800-367-4709), where prices start at \$7.50 for a 2.75-ounce jar.

You'll need a 10-inch springform pan for the Chocolate-Espresso Mousse Torte. If you don't have one already, look for it at Thepeppermillinc.com (866-871-4022), where it's \$41.99.

### Meatloaf, p. 36

Both Alexandra Guarnaschelli and Suvir Saran bake their meatloaves on parchment-lined baking sheets. Parchment is available in many supermarkets, but you can also purchase it online from Bakerscatalogue.com (800-827-6836), which sells 100 half-sheets (the right size for a rimmed baking sheet) for \$18.95. Jessica Bard's meatloaf recipe calls for a metal 9x13-inch baking pan. If you don't have one, we like Sur La Table's tri-ply stainless-steel roasting pan (pictured on p. 36); it's \$99.95 at Surlatable.com (800-243-0852).

### Coconut Milk, p. 62

Coconut milk is available in well-stocked supermarkets as well as in ethnic grocery stores. For an online source, visit Amazon.com, which sells both Aroy-D (\$1.99 for a 14-ounce can) and Chaokoh (\$1.29 for 5.6 ounces, \$2.99 for 13.5 ounces) brands. Latinmerchant.com (206-223-9374) carries both malagueta peppers (\$4.75 for a 2.17-ounce bottle) and dendê oil (\$3.99 for 5.29 ounces).

Some supermarkets carry fresh lemongrass for the bread pudding recipe, but if yours doesn't, you can find it online at Mythaimart.com, where you can buy 8 ounces for \$3.89. For 8-ounce ramekins similar to the ones on p. 64, go to Cookswares.com (800-915-9788), where they sell for \$4.99 each. If you can't find dried peaches for the oatmeal recipe, try another dried fruit, or look to Bulkfoods.com (888-285-5266), where dried peaches cost \$8.71 per pound.

### Quick Vegetable Sautés, p. 44

For these dishes, Susie Middleton loves her 10-inch (3-quart), stainless-steel, straight-sided All-Clad sauté pan. To buy one, visit Cooking.com (800-663-8810), where they sell for \$204.95. There, you'll also find many brands of tongs and silicone spatulas.



### From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72

For dendê oil and malagueta peppers, see the source under Coconut Milk at left.

### Baguettes, p. 58

Plastic bowl scrapers with both a round and a flat edge are available at Cheftools.com (866-716-2433); prices start at 69¢. ♦



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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol. (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
<b>In Season</b>	24												
Mediterranean Kale & White Bean Soup with Sausage		200	70	13	21	8	2	4	1	10	530	4	based on 8 servings
<b>Meatloaf</b>	36												
Bacon-Wrapped Meatloaf with Mushroom Gravy		340	170	26	15	19	6	9	1.5	105	610	1	based on 8 servings
Meatloaf with Fresh Scallions & Herbs		390	190	24	25	22	9	8	2.5	155	750	2	based on 8 servings
Glazed Meatloaf with Peppers & Warm Spices		300	170	24	10	19	7	7	1.5	115	490	1	based on 16 servings
<b>Red, White &amp; Purple Potatoes</b>	40												
Roasted Baby Red, White & Purple Potatoes		160	60	3	24	7	1	5	0.8	0	105	3	based on 6 servings
Braised Fingerlings with Thyme & Butter		150	50	3	22	6	3.5	1.5	0.3	15	170	2	based on 6 servings
Baby Yukon Potato Salad with Shallots & Bacon		230	120	5	24	13	2.5	8	1.5	5	580	2	based on 6 servings
<b>Vegetable Sautés</b>	44												
Balsamic Sautéed Mushrooms		150	110	3	9	13	4.5	6	1	15	220	2	based on 4 servings
Chinese Restaurant-Style Sautéed Green Beans		170	110	2	14	13	3.5	8	1	10	370	4	based on 3 servings
Gingerly Sautéed Carrots		180	110	1	18	12	5	5	0.9	20	370	4	based on 3 servings
<b>Macaroni &amp; Cheese</b>	48												
Classic Baked Macaroni & Cheese		630	280	25	60	32	18	10	2	80	830	3	based on 8 servings
<b>Saucy Chicken</b>	50												
Mediterranean Chicken with Mushrooms & Zucchini		470	240	43	10	27	7	12	5	135	590	2	based on 6 servings
Pomegranate-Orange Chicken		650	340	45	35	37	7	12	15	125	300	6	based on 6 servings
Chicken with Apples & Cider		480	230	41	18	25	9	9	4.5	140	480	4	based on 6 servings
<b>Tomato Soup</b>	54												
Classic Tomato Soup		110	50	3	11	5	1.5	3	0.5	5	430	2	based on 8 servings
Creamy Tomato Soup with Basil Coulis		250	190	4	13	21	3	15	2.5	0	460	3	based on 6 servings
Southwest Tomato & Roasted Pepper Soup		170	110	5	11	12	4	7	1	10	220	3	based on 6 servings
<b>French Bread</b>	58												
Mini Baguettes		280	10	10	55	1.5	0.2	0.1	0.5	0	580	2	based on 6 servings
<b>Coconut Milk</b>	62												
Creamy Coconut Oatmeal		550	320	11	54	36	22	7	4	0	90	9	based on 4 servings
Winter Vegetable Soup with Coconut Milk & Pear		220	140	4	23	15	12	1.5	0.4	10	310	6	based on 8 servings
Brazilian Chicken & Shrimp Stew		490	300	36	13	33	13	14	4	215	650	3	based on 4 servings
Toasted Coconut & Lemongrass Bread Puddings		360	230	10	27	25	17	4.5	1.5	185	280	2	based on 8 servings
<b>Chocolate Ganache</b>	66												
Hot Chocolate		420	270	8	36	30	18	9	1	60	105	3	based on 8 servings
Hot Fudge Sauce		80	60	1	8	6	4	2	0.2	10	5	1	based on 1 Tbs.
Truffles		90	60	1	9	7	4	2	0.2	10	4	1	per truffle (yield 45)
Chocolate-Espresso Mousse Torte		290	170	5	30	19	11	6	0.9	135	45	2	based on 12 servings
<b>Test Kitchen</b>	72												
Chicken Broth		40	15	5	3	1.5	0.4	0.7	0.3	0	25	0	per cup
Fried Meatloaf		490	250	26	34	28	9	11	4	205	860	2	based on 4 servings
<b>Quick &amp; Delicious</b>	86a												
Shrimp Stew with Coconut Milk, Tomatoes & Cilantro		270	140	29	6	15	10	3	1	250	580	1	based on 8 servings
Quick Chicken Chili		590	180	69	32	20	5	7	5	175	270	7	based on 8 servings
Sausages & White Bean Stew with Tomatoes & Thyme		530	170	31	46	19	7	9	2.5	45	1490	9	based on 6 servings
Grilled Brie, Turkey & Pear Sandwiches		490	240	33	29	27	14	8	2.5	115	840	4	based on 4 servings
Risotto with Scallops, Pancetta & Spinach		390	100	22	50	11	3.5	5	1.5	30	600	2	based on 8 servings
Curried Carrot Soup with Cilantro		140	50	4	21	6	1	2.5	2.5	0	230	4	based on 6 servings
<b>Back Cover</b>													
Tomato Soup with Fennel, Leek & Potato		150	70	5	15	8	1	5	0.9	0	230	3	based on 6 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional

ingredients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.





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**Barilla Farfalle with Prosciutto and green peas in a creamy sauce**

*Ingredients*

- |                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Barilla Farfalle       | 1 box      |
| Extra virgin olive oil | 2 tbsp     |
| White onion            | 1 small    |
| Prosciutto             | 6 ounces   |
| Green peas             | 1 1/2 cups |
| Dry white wine         | 1/2 cup    |
| Half & Half            | 2 cups     |
| Heavy cream            | 1/2 cup    |
| Parmesan cheese        | 1/2 cup    |
| Salt & black pepper    | to taste   |

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# Tomato Soup for Supper

Loaded with fennel and potatoes, this hearty tomato soup is perfect with a grilled cheese sandwich, but a fresh spinach salad would make the meal, too.

For an elegant twist, try puréeing the soup (see the tip below).



## Tomato Soup with Fennel, Leek & Potato

*Yields 5½ cups; serves four to six.*

The Pernod in this recipe is optional, but we highly recommend including it because it enhances and deepens the fennel flavor beautifully.

**3 Tbs. olive oil**

**1 tsp. fennel seed, coarsely crushed or ground in a spice grinder**

**1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed, cored, and cut into small dice (about 2 cups; save some fronds for optional garnish)**

**1 large leek (white and light-green parts only), halved lengthwise, rinsed well, and cut into small dice (about 1 cup)**

**1 Tbs. Pernod (optional)**

**3 cups lower-salt chicken broth**

**28-oz. can whole peeled plum tomatoes, drained and coarsely chopped (reserve the juice)**

**1 medium red or yellow potato, peeled and cut into medium dice**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a nonreactive 4-quart saucepan, heat the oil over medium-low heat. Add the fennel seed and cook until fragrant and lightly brown, about 3 minutes. Add the fennel bulb, leek, and Pernod (if using) and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes.

Add the broth, tomatoes, and potato. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until the potatoes are cooked through, 30 to 40 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve chunky or purée in a blender. If you purée the soup and it is too thick, add some of the reserved tomato juice. Garnish with chopped fennel fronds, if desired.

*Perla Meyers, author of eight cookbooks, including How to Peel a Peach: And 1001 Other Things Every Good Cook Needs to Know* ♦



### Smooth or chunky

This soup can be puréed in the blender for a velvety version of the original or served straight from the pot with its tender vegetables intact.

For more tomato soup recipes, turn to p. 54.



## Dig into something comforting

BY PAM ANDERSON

Though I'm surely in the minority, winter is my favorite season. I love the shorter days and the heartier fare. And while dusk is my usual signal to start dinner, that's not the case in the winter—just because the sun fades in midafternoon doesn't mean that I can always afford extra kitchen time to prepare all those stick-to-the-ribs winter favorites.

So at this time of year, I rely on comforting dishes that are also fast. Store-bought rotisserie chickens make it easy to pull off a quick chili. Combining sausages and a simple bean stew makes a soul-satisfying meal come together pronto. And what's winter without grilled cheese and soup? Instead of the usual tomato, try carrot soup infused with curry. In your sandwich, let Brie stand in for Cheddar.

For company, serve a spicy shrimp stew, which yields enough for six to eight. And how about risotto for dinner—once you learn the technique, you can easily change the flavors (try substituting shrimp for the scallops or peas for the spinach).



1.



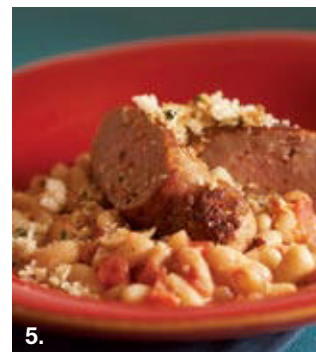
2.



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6.

1. Quick Chicken Chili
2. Grilled Brie, Turkey & Pear Sandwiches
3. Curried Carrot Soup with Cilantro
4. Shrimp Stew with Coconut Milk, Tomatoes & Cilantro
5. Sausages & White Bean Stew with Tomatoes, Thyme & Crisp Breadcrumbs
6. Risotto with Scallops, Pancetta & Spinach



## Sausages & White Bean Stew with Tomatoes, Thyme & Crisp Breadcrumbs

*Serves six.*

**1½ Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1½ cups fresh breadcrumbs**  
**2 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh thyme leaves**  
**9 sweet Italian sausages**  
**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 medium onion, cut into medium dice**  
**3 cloves garlic, minced**  
**1½ cups dry white wine, like Sauvignon Blanc**  
**14.5-oz. can petite-diced tomatoes**  
**Three 15.5-oz. cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed**  
**1 cup lower-salt chicken broth**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a 12-inch skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the breadcrumbs and 1 Tbs. of the thyme and cook, stirring frequently, until the breadcrumbs are golden, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a bowl to cool. Wipe out the skillet.

Using a small, sharp knife, pierce each sausage in 3 or 4 places. Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in the skillet over medium heat. Add the sausages and cook, turning occasionally, until cooked through and golden brown on all sides, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the sausages to a cutting board and tent with foil to keep warm.

While the sausages cook, heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in a deep, 10- to 11-inch-wide pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and the remaining 1 Tbs. thyme and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the wine, raise the heat to high, and simmer until reduced by half, about 7 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juices and cook until very soft and about a quarter of the liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Add the beans and broth.

Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for about 10 minutes to blend the flavors. Using a potato masher, gently crush some of the stew with 4 to 5 strokes, or just enough to thicken it a bit. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Cut the sausages in half on the diagonal. Ladle the stew into wide, deep bowls, arrange the sausages on the stew, and top with the breadcrumbs.

**Tip:** You can substitute any type of raw sausage for the Italian sausage; lamb sausage is especially nice.



## Risotto with Scallops, Pancetta & Spinach

*Serves four to five as a main course, eight as a first course.*

**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**4 oz. pancetta, cut into small dice**  
**1 small onion, cut into small dice**  
**2 cups arborio rice**  
**½ cup dry vermouth**  
**1 quart lower-salt chicken broth, heated**  
**1 lb. all-natural “dry” bay scallops**  
**7 oz. baby spinach, washed, spun dry, and coarsely chopped**  
**1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for sprinkling**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the pancetta and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the onion and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, 4 to 6 minutes longer.

Stir in the rice until well coated with fat. Add the vermouth and cook, stirring constantly until absorbed, about 1 minute. Add 1 cup of broth and cook, stirring constantly, until nearly absorbed, about 3 minutes. Continue adding the broth 1 cup at a time, stirring very frequently until each addition is absorbed, 20 to 25 minutes total. Add 1 cup of water and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the rice is just barely done, 3 to 5 minutes more.

Add the scallops and spinach and cook, stirring constantly, until the scallops are just cooked, the spinach wilts, and the rice is mostly tender, with a little chew at the center, about 5 minutes longer. Stir in the Parmigiano and season to taste with salt. Serve immediately, sprinkling each portion with a little Parmigiano and a grind or two of pepper.





## Quick Chicken Chili

*Serves six to eight.*

**2 Tbs. vegetable oil**  
**1 large onion, cut into medium dice**  
**2 Tbs. ground cumin**  
**2 tsp. dried oregano**  
**3 medium cloves garlic, minced**  
**3½- to 4-lb. store-bought rotisserie chicken, meat removed and chopped**  
**1 jar or can (about 4 oz.) diced mild green chiles, drained**  
**1 quart lower-salt chicken broth**  
**Two 15.5-oz. cans white beans, drained**  
**1 cup frozen corn**

Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven. Add the onion and cook, stirring, until tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the cumin, oregano, and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute longer. Stir in the chicken and chiles and then add the broth and 1 can of beans. Bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to

low and simmer, partially covered and stirring occasionally, until the flavors blend, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, purée the remaining can of beans in a food processor. Stir the puréed beans into the chicken mixture along with the corn. Continue to simmer to blend the flavors, about 5 minutes longer. Ladle into bowls and serve.

**Serving suggestion:** If you like, serve the chili with any combination of the following: tortilla or corn chips, shredded sharp cheese, thinly sliced scallions, cilantro leaves, sliced pickled jalapeño chiles, red or green hot sauce, sour cream, guacamole, red or green salsa, and lime wedges.



## Grilled Brie, Turkey & Pear Sandwiches

*Serves four.*

**One-half ripe pear, cored and thinly sliced**  
**1 tsp. fresh lemon juice**  
**1½ cups (about 8 oz.) shredded cooked turkey or chicken**  
**1½ tsp. lightly chopped fresh thyme leaves**  
**Eight ½- to ¾-inch-thick slices artisan-style whole-grain sandwich bread**  
**2 Tbs. Dijon mustard**  
**8 oz. Brie, sliced**  
**4 tsp. unsalted butter, softened**

In a small bowl, toss the pear slices with the lemon juice.

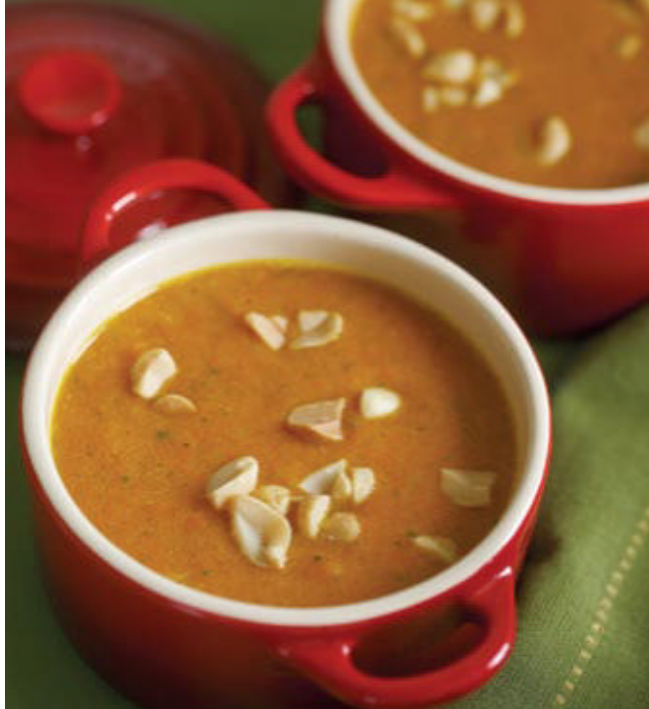
Heat a large skillet or griddle over low heat.

Meanwhile, toss the turkey and thyme in a medium bowl. Spread each bread slice with mustard. Arrange half of the Brie on four slices of the bread. Layer the pears over the Brie. Mound the turkey mixture on top of the pears, layer on the remaining Brie, and top with the remaining bread slices mustard side down.

Lightly spread the tops of the sandwiches with half of the butter and set them, buttered side down, in the heated skillet (if necessary, cook the sandwiches in two batches). Set a large heavy skillet right on top of the sandwiches and put 2 lb. of weights (canned goods work well) in the empty skillet. Cook the sandwiches until golden brown on one side, about 4 minutes.

Remove the weights, butter the sandwich tops, and turn the sandwiches over. Replace the skillet and weights and continue to cook until the second side is golden brown and the cheese is oozy, about 4 minutes longer. Cut the sandwiches in half and serve.

**Note:** If you have a panini maker, this is a great time to use it.



## Curried Carrot Soup with Cilantro

*Serves four to six.*

**2 Tbs. vegetable oil**  
**1½ lb. carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks (about 4 cups)**  
**1 large yellow onion, cut into 1-inch chunks**  
**3 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced**  
**1 tsp. curry powder**  
**3 cups lower-salt chicken broth**  
**Kosher salt**  
**1½ cups carrot juice; more as needed**  
**¼ cup packed fresh cilantro leaves**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**Chopped peanuts, for garnish (optional)**

Heat the oil in a 10- or 11-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat until hot. Add the carrots and then the onion. Cook, stirring very little at first and more frequently towards the end, until the vegetables are golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes.

Add the garlic and curry and cook, stirring, for about 30 seconds. Add the broth and ½ tsp. salt and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until the vegetables are very tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the carrot juice and cilantro.

Purée the soup in a blender, working in two batches and making sure to vent the blender by removing the pop-up center or lifting one edge of the top (drape a towel over the top to keep the soup from leaking).

Return the soup to the pan, heat through, and season to taste with salt and pepper. If necessary, add more carrot juice to thin to your liking. Ladle into bowls and serve, sprinkled with the peanuts, if using.



## Shrimp Stew with Coconut Milk, Tomatoes & Cilantro

*Serves six to eight.*

**3 lb. jumbo (21 to 25 per lb.) shrimp, peeled and deveined**  
**Kosher salt**  
**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 large red bell pepper, sliced into very thin 1½-inch-long strips**  
**4 scallions, thinly sliced (white and green parts kept separate)**  
**½ cup chopped fresh cilantro**  
**4 large cloves garlic, finely chopped**  
**½ to 1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**  
**14.5-oz. can petite-diced tomatoes, drained**  
**13.5- or 14-oz. can coconut milk**  
**2 Tbs. fresh lime juice**

In a large bowl, sprinkle the shrimp with 1 tsp. salt; toss to coat, and set aside.

Heat the oil in a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven over

medium-high heat. Add the bell pepper and cook, stirring, until almost tender, about 4 minutes. Add the scallion whites, ¼ cup of the cilantro, the garlic, and the pepper flakes. Continue to cook, stirring, until fragrant, 30 to 60 seconds.

Add the tomatoes and coconut milk and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer to blend the flavors and thicken the sauce slightly, about 5 minutes.

Add the shrimp and continue to cook, partially covered and stirring frequently, until the shrimp are just cooked through, about 5 minutes more. Add the lime juice and season to taste with salt. Serve sprinkled with the scallion greens and remaining ¼ cup cilantro.

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*Contributing editor Pam Anderson is the author of Perfect Recipes for Having People Over. Her newest book, The Perfect Recipe for Losing Weight and Eating Great—Change Your Life for Good, will be published in the spring. ♦*